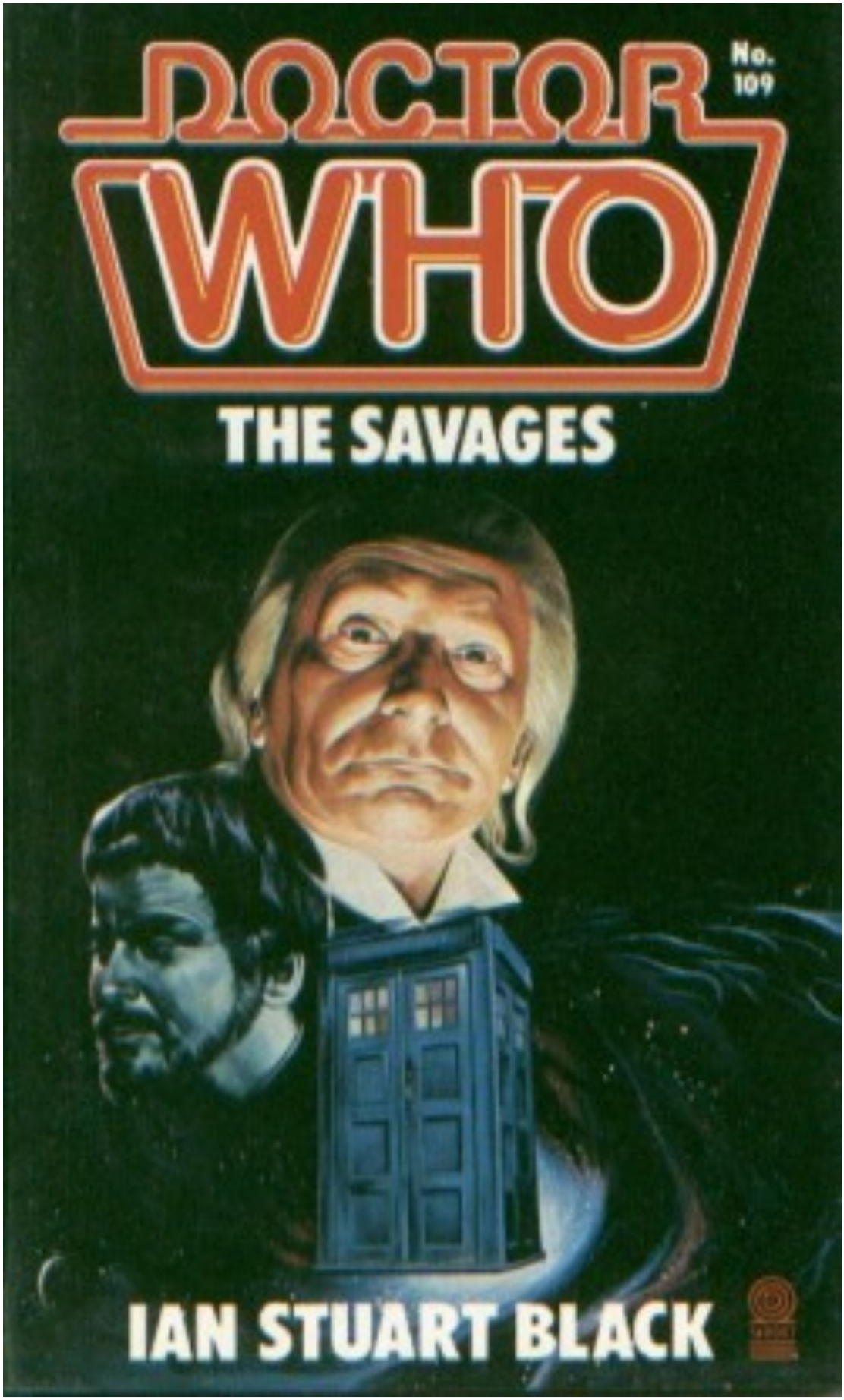
DOCTOR WHO
No. 109
THE SAVAGES
IAN STUART BLACK

DOCTOR WHO
THE SAVAGES

By IAN STUART BLACK

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1 'Are You Sure You Know Where We Are?'

Long before the estimated time of arrival of the TARDIS, the Doctor was looking particularly pleased with himself. He had been juggling with a number of the intricate dials on the banks of instruments that ranged across the TARDIS's control console, making calculations, adjusting a multi-computer, and coming to conclusions that brought a dry smile to his time-weathered features.

'It's not always I can predict with such accuracy exactly where we are in time and space, there are often too many extraneous factors, but I think I can safely say just exactly where and when we shall materialise.'

He waved a batch of print-outs towards his two young companions. There was no point Steven or Dodo trying to check them, they were far too complicated for them to understand.

'All right. You tell us,' said Steven.

'We are at a very distant point of time,' said the Doctor confidently. 'And at an age of great advancement, peace and prosperity.'

'Oh, good,' said Dodo. 'So this will be a quiet trip?' 'More than likely,' nodded the Doctor.

They recognised the change in rhythm as the TARDIS began to materialise.

'Wherever it is, we're there,' said Steven.

They looked up to examine the scanner. This would be their first sight of the planet on which they had arrived, always a moment of excitement, no matter how many times such arrivals had been experienced before. The Doctor didn't appear much interested however. He was too busy collecting an odd-looking instrument, and fitting it together until it looked like an old-fashioned ship's compass.

But Steven and Dodo watched the outside world as it appeared on the screen above their heads. It didn't seem to fit in at all with what the Doctor had just said. There was nothing to indicate great advancement—no signs of prosperity, in fact no signs of life at all—only a great rocky ravine spread out before them, silent, empty, bleak.

'Are you sure?' asked Steven.

'About what, my boy?'

'About where we are?'

'Perfectly. And now I must hurry. Wait for me here. I won't be more than five minutes. I must just check one or two things, and then I'll be back.'

As he opened the doors of the TARDIS, both Steven and Dodo peered at the world beyond. It was exactly as the scanner had shown — perhaps even bleaker and emptier. The rocky land seemed to go rolling away as far as the eye could see. There was no sign of habitation and not even any cultivation.

'Primitive, if you ask me,' whispered Steven.

The Doctor was paying them no attention: his mind was clearly elsewhere as he hurried away across the stony, dusty land. Unfortunately he didn't turn to look back or perhaps he might have changed his plans; although it's more than

probable that once the Doctor was as sure as he was on this occasion, nothing would make him change his mind.

Nevertheless, the sight of the creature in the rocks behind the TARDIS might have made him check his calculations. For what explanation could there be for such a being — powerful, dressed in animal skins, gripping a crude, vicious club — a savage-looking animal, undoubtedly human, but surely from a very early stage in man's development, a dangerous savage who watched the Doctor with eyes that followed each move with fear and hate.

The ravine was dotted with great boulders, shrubs, bushes; and there were patches of scrubland with dry, thorny trees. Nothing seemed to grow very high, but the area was ideal cover for anyone in hiding. As the Doctor moved further away from the TARDIS, taking a path that twisted and turned through the rocks, he was totally unaware of the way that the spikey branches were moved aside so that watching eyes could follow his progress. Each step he took was noted with grim satisfaction, for he was moving closer to a saucer of rocks in which he would be surrounded, where sounds would be stifled, and the secret watchers could drop on him from all sides.

Not that the Doctor gave the slightest thought to any danger; he was far too absorbed in what he was doing, stopping every few steps to take readings from his odd instrument, making notes, nodding with satisfaction, even permitting himself a smile of approval. He didn't even notice the slight sound of a shuffle, as though feet were moving over dry leaves, nor did he notice the shadow that fell on the rocks behind him. He was a man blissfully unaware of anything except the satisfaction of the problems of science that intrigued him to the exclusion of all else. And in this state of mind far more than five minutes passed.

Dodo was more patient than Steven; she had learned to accept the Doctor and his eccentric ways. Besides, she had great confidence in him.

But Steven couldn't take things so easily. He strode up and down outside the TARDIS, glancing at his watch every now and again, frowning, peering down the ravine, listening, then continuing to stride up and down again.

Dodo merely sat on a rock.

'He's been gone far longer than five minutes,' said Steven finally. He didn't like to admit, even to himself, how anxious he felt. Partly because he couldn't explain why.

'For a man who has travelled about in time more than anyone else,' said Dodo, 'the Doctor seems to have less idea about it than most people... And that's funny.'

'This is nothing to laugh at, Dodo.'

'Don't take things so seriously,' she said. If you're worried you shouldn't have let him go.'

'Try telling the Doctor what to do,' said Steven. 'Then you should have gone with him.'

'He didn't give me a chance. He was out of that door, and off like a shot, with that ridiculous calculator of his.'

'Don't just complain, Steven. Do something about it.'

He glared at Dodo relaxing on her rock. In a way, he wished he could take life as easily as she did, but he knew he couldn't.

'Very well,' he said, 'I will do something!'

He turned in the direction the Doctor had taken and began to move cautiously through the rocks and trees. For a second he thought he saw something on the cliff above him. It seemed as if something moved, but he wasn't sure. It was probably a trick of the light. One's eyes took a little time to get used to real sunshine after spending so long in the TARDIS. He moved on.

The Doctor was fond of this particular calculator of his. He had always found it accurate, and it was giving him some most satisfactory readings.

'Precisely what I thought,' he muttered to himself. 'My young friends are going to get quite a surprise.'

He moved on towards the rocks ahead. They would be a fine place from which to take a final reading, in spite of the confounded bushes, rather like brambles, that grew across his path and made the going difficult.

They were also very thick across the track, so thick that it would have been impossible to see the two shapes lying huddled on the ground, watching the Doctor at ground level, seeing his feet pass by just a yard or two away. And after he had gone, a hand reached out and clutched the primitive club in the bushes, the hand that took it being rough-skinned and tanned by all weathers. As the figure crouched low, his mop of hair fell across his savage face. Just behind him, a second figure edged forward to join him, armed in the same way, and dressed in similar crude animal skins. They waited until the Doctor was behind a tall outcrop of rock, then they moved in behind him.

Steven looked back to discover the TARDIS was no longer in sight, but there was still no sign of the Doctor. He was uneasy about going further. Maybe the Doctor would go in a circle and come back another way. But Steven hadn't much hope in that.

He stood on a rock and shouted, 'Doctor, where are you?'

In the distance the Doctor came to a stop. He had a twinge of guilt. Perhaps he'd been away more than five minutes.

'Dear me,' he said. 'What's the matter now?' Then he called back, 'I won't be long.'

He was very anxious to make this last reading. It wouldn't take long and he hurriedly set up the adjustors, his attention only on the machine.

If he had turned, he could not have helped seeing the two figures closing in on him, moving from bush to bush, revealing not only their fierce anger, but also a constant fear which made them tremble even as they prepared to attack — a fear which made them drop instantaneously to the ground as the Doctor turned casually to look around. He frowned crossly as he heard Steven still calling in the distance: 'Doctor... Doctor.'

Sitting on her rock, Dodo could hear him as well. She wondered how far away he was. The voice sounded quite distant. But a much closer sound brought her to her feet with a start. A trickle of pebbles came tumbling down the side of the ravine close to her. She looked up to see what had caused it, but there was nothing there. She suddenly felt very much on her own, and wished Steven hadn't gone. She also wished the Doctor was there. Still, there was no need for alarm... Perhaps those pebbles... She couldn't help herself. She spun round with a scream. Up above, peering down on her from the rocks, was a terrifying figure — a man covered in skins, holding a spear, looking at her with a frightening

expression. She heard Steven shouting, ‘Dodo... Dodo’, and there was the sound of someone racing through the scrub towards her.

She was standing with her face hidden in her hands as Steven reached her.

He grabbed her. ‘What is it? What’s the matter?’

‘Up there,’ was all she could say. She pointed to the side of the ravine that rose above them.

He stared up. Blue sky backed the rocky ridge. All was silent, nothing moved.

‘There’s nothing there.’

‘There was a man. I saw him with a spear. Dressed in skins. Watching me.’

Steven scanned the peaceful scene. ‘Are you sure? The Doctor said..

‘I don’t care what he said. He’s made a mistake. I saw him. A savage. Right out of the stone age.’

‘So we’re not in the future at all. The Doctor’s wrong. He’s got the wrong distant point of time. We must be back at the beginning of Man.’

The Doctor had just completed his last reading and began to fold up the calculator into its container. And, what was more, he was cheerfully pleased with his final result.

‘So, they thought I might have made a mistake, did they? Doubting the Doctor’s ability, eh?’

He looked forward to convincing his fellow travellers, and turned to retrace his steps to the TARDIS very briskly.

In the bushes the two men watched him, uncertain what to do. To wait? To attack? To turn and run? The leader kept his ground, whispering, ‘Wait, Tor. Wait.’

But the man addressed as Tor was trembling. ‘He’s coming, Chal. We have no chance. His light gun...

‘That’s no light gun,’ said Chal softly. They stared through the undergrowth at the object the stranger carried.

The Doctor strode jauntily towards them. Doubts beset Tor. ‘He’s not one of our people,’ said Chal grimly. He put his hand on Tor’s arm, trying to reassure him. He could feel the big man shaking with alarm.

‘We must run,’ whispered Tor. ‘Before he sees us.’ ‘We stay,’ whispered Chal fiercely. ‘And we kill this man.’

Perhaps the Doctor owed his life to the fact that the strap of his calculator got caught on a bush and he stopped to undo it. As he did so, the faint noise he had heard before was repeated. He wasn’t in the least alarmed. It was as though it was something he had been expecting.

‘Hello there,’ called the Doctor, still adjusting the strap. ‘Come out, if you please. There is absolutely no need for you to be alarmed.’

Whether or not Chal heard him, or whether he understood, made no difference. He took a murderous grip of his club and whispered ‘Now’ to Tor. He had begun to move from the cover of the bushes when Tor grabbed him and dragged him back.

‘You fool,’ whispered Chal, but he saw Tor was looking beyond him, over his head.

‘Look,’ said Tor.

Then Chal saw two figures just beyond the Doctor, and he and Tor both threw themselves on the ground.

Apparently the Doctor noticed none of this as he finally tugged his strap clear of the bushes. Besides, he was too busy continuing his conversation with the unseen strangers behind him.

'Can't you hear me?' asked the Doctor casually. 'After all, surely you expected me? I'll be disappointed if you didn't.'

He turned sharply as two men stepped from the shadow of the rocks.

'There you are,' the Doctor greeted them. 'I thought you were around somewhere. Good of you to come along.'

They were standing a few yards away, both dressed in what the Doctor took to be the uniform of some advanced culture, although a touch too military for his taste, and he noted with disapproval that they carried light guns of considerable power and sophistication; but, he supposed, they had to take precautions to protect themselves against the unknown.

What did please him was the look of the two men, well-built, carrying themselves with great assurance, with a pleasant manner, and a cultivated bearing; tall, attractive, showing deference to him as they would to someone they respected.

'We have come to welcome you, Doctor. I am Edal, Captain of our Guard, and this is my lieutenant, Exorse.'

The younger man bowed to the Doctor. 'This is a great honour, Doctor, to have you visit our planet.'

'Just as I thought,' said the Doctor. 'You know who I am. And I am expected?'

'We don't know your name, sir,' said Edal. 'But our space observers have their own name for you.' 'And what is that?' asked the Doctor.

'They know you as the Traveller From Beyond Time,' said Exorse.

The Doctor nodded with a hint of approval. 'And how did you know when and where to expect me?'

'The Elders of our city have been plotting the course of your space-time machine for many light years. They estimated its arrival here some days ago,' explained Exorse.

'How very clever of them,' mused the Doctor.

It was at that moment that Captain Edal noticed the instrument the Doctor carried. He was at once wary. Some of the welcome vanished from his manner.

'We understood from the Elders that you did not

carry weapons.' He pointed to the Doctor's calculator.

'They were quite right,' said the Doctor dismissively. 'This is my own invention. Used to make calculations — of many sorts. As I told my two young friends

'You are not alone?' said Edal sharply.

'Did you expect me to be?' asked the Doctor.

'The Elders have given us no information about that,' said the Captain. 'Do you have companions?'

'Yes, but you'll find them very pleasant,' said the Doctor cheerfully, 'in spite of their youthful indiscretions.'

He glanced down the path towards the TARDIS. ‘That reminds me,’ he added, ‘they expected me back some time ago.’

But Edal more or less barred his path, firmly but politely. ‘We have no instructions about them,’ he said. ‘The Elders must first be informed. You must come with us.’

‘Must?’ said the Doctor, with a raised eyebrow. He did not care for the note of authority that had crept into the Captain’s voice. But the younger man remained charming and stepped forward to explain.

‘Captain Edal merely wishes to take you to see the Elders of our City. They are in session, waiting to welcome you.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘Very well. But perhaps you, young man, would care to go and collect my friends. You’ll find them along that path. Steven and Dodo. Tell them the Doctor sent you.’

Exorse glanced at his Captain.

Edal nodded. ‘Go and fetch them, Exorse. Bring them to the City.’ Then he turned and signalled to the Doctor. ‘This way...’ and as an afterthought... ‘if you please.’

He moved off with the Doctor following. Exorse turned and headed through the shrubland towards the TARDIS.

2 ‘You Have Made Me Look Very Grand’

Not even the Doctor could be so far out in his calculations about time, thought Steven. There must be something wrong. He might need help.

‘I must go and look for him, Dodo. You never know with him. Something may have happened.’

She didn’t like the idea of being left alone again. ‘I’m coming with you,’ she said.

But they hadn’t taken more than a couple of steps when she gripped his arm and whispered, ‘Steven, look! There is something up there.’

‘You’re imagining things,’ he said. He began to move off, guessing they ought to hurry.

There was a loud ‘thump’ as something hit the ground beside them. A spear ricocheted across the rocky surface with a clatter. They spun round. It could have come only from the ridge above them, but there was no one in sight.

‘I told you,’ whispered Dodo.

Steven crossed to the fallen object and picked it up cautiously.

‘This really is a primitive piece of work.’ The shaft had been hacked into shape. He fingered the point. ‘But, look! It’s as sharp as a knife!’

They peered up at the rocks above. Nothing moved. ‘What do we do?’ asked Dodo.

‘Back to the TARDIS,’ said Steven.

He hurried her towards the safety of the time-space machine. This seemed to act as a signal for they were suddenly showered with a volley of spears. It was a miracle they weren’t hit.

And then, just as suddenly, the attack came to an abrupt stop. It was such a surprise they stopped running. What had happened?

They turned in amazement as a youthful voice called, ‘Hello, there. Dodo and Steven?’

Standing on the edge of the scrubland was a good-looking young man, smiling cheerfully and holding out a welcoming hand.

'You know us?' said Steven blankly.

'Welcome to the Traveller's companions,' said the young man.

'Who are you?' asked Dodo.

'I am Exorse. The Traveller told us I should find
you here. He said to say the Doctor sent me.'

'The Doctor?' Dodo was relieved. 'Is he all right?' 'Perfectly,' said Exorse 'He has gone to meet the Elders of our City.'

Dodo looked at him, still puzzled. He seemed a most cultured young man. 'But we thought the place was full of savages.'

Exorse grinned broadly. 'I think you'll find us fairly civilised.'

'So this isn't the Iron Age?' said Dodo.

'By no means,' Exorse assured her.

'And the Doctor was right,' said Steven.

'I suppose he generally is,' suggested Exorse. 'Now I must invite you to come with me. Our Elders wait to honour your Doctor. They will be very happy also to welcome his friends.'

Dodo still hadn't got her thoughts in order, but she and Steven both set off with this very pleasant young stranger.

The Doctor had imagined what sort of a city he was coming to, but it far surpassed his expectations. It was built of the most beautiful stone, rather like marble, but with a lighter, more delicate appearance. A pleasing and restful design, it did one good merely to look at the way in which the arches curved, and the columns tapered.

Artistic people clearly lived in these surroundings. It was a place of light, and gaiety, learning, and laughter. He felt as though a load had been lifted from his own shoulders as Captain Edal conducted him up the steps to the spacious council chamber, towards the raised platform where a collection of people rose to greet this white-haired stranger who had just dropped out of the skies.

A fanfare of trumpets sounded gently, and there was a noise like muted cheering. The Elders themselves broke into applause as Edal announced the Doctor.

'You are very welcome, Doctor. Welcome indeed.' The man who stepped forward was clearly the Chief amongst the Elders, with charm and intelligence, powerful, broad-shouldered, elegant in his stylised dress with a trim dark beard and a ready smile.

'I am Jano and I represent the Elders of our City, all of whom think of you as an old friend, though all we know of you is what we have recorded in our charts of time and space.'

The Doctor was quite moved. 'My thanks,' he said. 'It is very kind to make me feel so welcome.'

'We are honoured by your visit. Everyone here looks upon you with admiration. These are my Councillors.'

The reception party bowed their greetings as Jano moved across to an elaborate display of maps and charts, sparkling with a multitude of little lights picking out details across a galaxy of stars and stratospheres.

He indicated them with a flourish. ‘We have charted your voyages from galaxy to galaxy, and from age to age, but we never thought we would meet you face to face. This is the proudest moment in our history.’

The Doctor was about to protest, but Jano turned and signalled to a group of attendants. They moved towards the Doctor as Jano continued. ‘And in order to show our admiration we would be pleased if you would accept the office of one of our High Elders.’

The attendants were carrying robes, an ornamented cap, and other regalia. It looked to the Doctor very much like a robing ceremony at an old-world university.

‘This is very good of you indeed.’ The Doctor had to admit he was flattered.

If you will allow our attendants to help you on with your robes, Doctor,’ suggested Jano.

‘I am not honoured like this everywhere I go,’ said the Doctor with some feeling, as he struggled into the splendid coloured gown.

The attendants were led by a rather pretty young girl, he noticed. It was surprising how splendid all the people looked, and how contented and assured they were. He wondered vaguely what their secret must be.

By the time he was fully adorned he looked quite magnificent. ‘We recognise you as the greatest specialist in time-space exploration,’ said Jano, viewing him with satisfaction. ‘You have taken that branch of learning beyond our elementary investigations.’

‘Come now,’ protested the Doctor. ‘I know very well you have been responsible for some remarkable scientific work. I have known for some time now that there existed a race of great intelligence in this segment of the universe.’

Jano nodded. The man had a quiet confidence about him. ‘Yes, Doctor. We like to think we have created something of lasting value here.’

The Doctor viewed himself in the mirrors that surrounded the hall, and it has to be said he liked what he saw. ‘Thank you, young ladies,’ he said. ‘I must say you have made me look very grand.’

He turned, as everyone else turned, to see the new arrivals as Exorse entered the Council Chamber with his two visitors. Both Dodo and Steven gazed around in wonder, and neither of them recognised the Doctor in his new clothes.

‘The two strangers,’ called Exorse. ‘Steven and Dodo.’

‘You are very welcome.’ Jano crossed to greet them.

‘So there you are, young man,’ said the Doctor. ‘What have you got to say now? Do you still think I made a mistake?’

Dodo let a grin spread over her face. ‘You’re really with it now, Doctor, in those clothes.’

‘With what?’ There were times when the Doctor really couldn’t understand the girl.

But Steven had eyes only for the marvels around him. ‘What is this place?’ he asked.

‘Did the Doctor not tell you?’ asked Jano, amused by the young man’s amazement.

‘He just said it was an age of great advancement,’ said Steven.

‘And I was right,’ added the Doctor. ‘Probably the greatest development of the civilised mind.’

‘But we are not perfect,’ said Jano. ‘For example, we didn’t realise the Doctor had anyone with him, or we would have made other preparations. Nevertheless, though our honours are for him, our gifts are for you.’

Two of the attendant girls came forward at a signal; they had a small, beautifully engraved and bejewelled hand mirror which they handed to Dodo.

It took her breath away. ‘Look at it, Steven,’ she said with delight, ‘it’s beautiful. Thank you very much. And see... These are real diamonds.’

But Steven was too absorbed as the attendants turned to him, one of them presenting him with a carved dagger, a real work of art.

‘For me?’ He could hardly believe it. ‘It’s magnificent.’

‘I am sorry,’ said the Doctor. ‘We don’t usually come bearing gifts. We have nothing to give you in return.’

‘Your visit is enough,’ said Jano. ‘And now perhaps Steven and Dodo would like to make themselves at home. Our young people will show them round.’

‘An excellent idea,’ said the Doctor. There were questions of a scientific nature he wanted to concentrate on, and the less intrusion the better. And as Steven and Dodo moved off with a crowd of the young attendants, he couldn’t deny himself a last quip, calling after them, ‘And perhaps next time you’ll believe me when I say I know where I am!’

Jano took the Doctor confidentially by the arm. ‘And now, Doctor, we have many questions to ask you.’

There was a general dispersal from the Council Chamber.

Exorse headed back for duty in the scrubland that lay outside the City. He found himself waljting alongside his Captain. Eclat was silent as they made their way back to where they had found the Doctor. Exorse noticed he frowned most of the way, and wondered what troubled him.

And when Edal spoke, he sounded bitter. ‘Of course, they don’t ask us for our opinion. We’re just the City Guard. It doesn’t matter what we think, does it?’

‘What is it?’ asked Exorse. He was used to the Captain’s moods.

‘I don’t trust them,’ said Edal. ‘I never did trust strangers, and I trust them less than most.’

‘Don’t trust them?’ Exorse blinked at him.

‘Why should we treat that old Doctor like one of ourselves?’ asked Edal suspiciously.

‘The Elders think highly of him,’ said Exorse. ‘The Elders!’ scoffed Edal. He couldn’t explain what disturbed him.

‘All right,’ he said ‘We’ve wasted enough of the morning already. Get back on patrol. We’ve a lot of work to catch up on. Take the crater section. Off you go.’

Exorse saluted and moved away into the scrubland, denser, rougher, rockier, than they had crossed over. He knew it was a place to be constantly on the alert. He brought his light gun into readiness.

Edal watched him disappear between rocks and bushes, and he still frowned angrily; then he too moved into the desolate scrub.

They were not unnoticed — not that they took much trouble to disguise where they were, striding through the bush like men who were masters.

From their place of hiding, both Chal and Tor watched them. It was best to be sure which way the Patrol was heading; they reckoned they could look after

themselves, but with them they had a third person — a young girl, dressed in the same sort of rough skins as they were themselves, dark-haired and pretty in a wild and startled fashion, her eyes following the progress of the two guards with alarm. Every sound made her jump. The two men tried to reassure her, but it wasn't easy when the girl knew they were afraid themselves. The safest thing would be to send her back to the caves. The Patrols seldom went there.

'They've started hunting,' said Chal softly.

'We must warn our people,' said Tor.

Chal whispered to the girl, 'Listen, Nanina. Get back to the caves as quickly as possible. Tell the families to hide. Not all together. Spread out.'

The girl looked at them anxiously. 'What about you, Chal?'

'We'll be safe,' said Chal. 'We're used to them.'

Nanina took a quick look at the guards. She could see only the Captain now, moving at an angle across the rocky waste. 'All right,' she said, 'I'll go.'

And as she slipped away through the bushes Chal called softly to her, 'Be careful how you go. Take care through the Craters.'

Without a sound she had ducked out of sight and vanished like a young animal.

'The gods go with her,' whispered Chal.

Nanina kept an eye on the one patrol man she could see as she wriggled from cover to cover, and then gained some protection behind a ridge of rocks. The going was easier now, but she didn't drop her vigilance. The fear of the hunters was so great, and the terror of being caught ran through her whole being, but she was determined to get back to the caves unseen. She crouched down behind the strange indented terrain as she began to make her way across the barren land, pitted like the surface of a moon, which her people called the Craters.

Somewhere on this same wide expanse Exorse was moving cautiously from rocky outcrop to rocky outcrop, his light gun at the ready, keeping a sharp look-out from left to right. He didn't want to stay in this wretched place longer than he had to. The sooner they made a killing the better. He kept his finger constantly on the trigger of his gun. He knew he might not get more than one chance. Those they hunted moved at speed. He could hope for only one glimpse, and he would have to take it. He moved softly over the dry stones.

The tour of the city was a series of surprises for Steven and Dodo.

It had been left to two of the attendants to show them round, and they were soon on very friendly terms. The girl was one of those who had given the Doctor his robes. She was named Flower, and the young man who pointed out most of the 'sights' was called Avon. He was bespectacled, and a little pompous, but he did his best to make sure the visitors enjoyed their journey through the city's beauty spots. He seemed to know most things, whereas Flower admitted she was a little shaky with her facts.

However Flower was sure of some things. 'We have built into the city a life-giving sun of our own. Isn't that right, Avon?'

Avon nodded. 'It's a man's intellect that decides the heat and cold of our lives.'

'Yes,' added Flower. 'And after all, the Elders know what's best for us.' She looked up at the synthetic sky and added wistfully, 'Although it would be rather nice to know what real things are like sometimes.'

‘Real what?’ asked Avon pompously.

‘You know... Real rain, real wind, real sunshine.’

‘Don’t be ridiculous.’ Avon indicated the panorama of the city which they could see through the arcades that surrounded them. They have given us all this.’

‘It’s beautiful,’ said Dodo.

‘And what’s more,’ he continued, ‘our artists have every opportunity to develop their talents. Here everyone has a chance to fulfill himself.’

Steven looked round in admiration. ‘It’s certainly a wonderful place. How have you managed it? I mean, what’s the secret?’

There was a moment of silence. Flower looked startled.

‘Secret? What makes you think we have a secret?’ ‘Well, other civilisations have failed to make this sort of advance,’ said Steven.

‘That doesn’t mean —’ began Flower, but Avon cut her off.

‘Be quiet, Flower,’ he said sharply. He turned to Steven. ‘Our scientists have made one simple discovery,’ he said. ‘Due to this they have found the way to give us all greater energy, greater intellect, and greater potential.’

‘One simple discovery?’ repeated Steven in amazement.

‘What is it?’ asked Dodo.

Avon hesitated. ‘That is something best discussed by the Elders and your Doctor.’

3 ‘A Remarkable Advance, Gentlemen. I’d Like To Know How’

The Doctor was a resplendent figure in his new robes as he sat in conference with Jano and the Elders of the City. They had considered many subjects, but the Doctor felt they had not touched on anything really fundamental.

He looked round at his hosts and lifted his arms to show off his cloak. ‘Well, gentlemen,’ he said, ‘you can’t expect me to wear these fine robes without asking a few important questions. After all, I have my reputation to think of.’

The others looked a little taken aback. ‘What do you mean?’ asked Jano.

‘If I accept your honours,’ explained the Doctor, ‘it means I must endorse your way of life. I really can’t do that without knowing something about it.’

‘But Doctor, surely you know a great deal about us?’

‘I know you are well in advance of other planets, but I don’t know how you managed to achieve this. You’ve made a remarkable advance, gentlemen. Now I’d like to know how.’

There was a moment’s silence from the others. It seemed to the Doctor they were waiting for Jano to speak.

The Craters always struck terror into Nanina. There seemed no way of crossing the area without having to scramble over open stretches. And then the gaunt rocks assumed such strange shapes, like the hunters in hiding. Her heart leapt to her mouth. Was there someone in the shadows ahead? Or was she imagining dangers? She crouched at the base of a rock and waited, listening for the faintest sound.

She was right to be wary. Exorse was coming through the scrubland towards her. He wasn’t sure if something had moved on the other side of the big crater. He began to close in on the rocks that littered the land. She could hear his footsteps, even though he came very softly over the pebbles. Like the rest of her people she could pick up the slightest sound.

But what could she do? It was too late to turn and run. From a hiding place on the ridge Chal and Tor watched anxiously.

'I don't see her,' whispered Tor. 'She must have got away safely.'

Chal shook his head. 'She hasn't crossed the ravine. She must still be hiding.'

'Can you see the hunter?' asked Tor.

'He is going into the ravine,' said Chal.

At that moment they saw Nanina. She rose from the ground and started to run, racing like a frightened animal through the thorn bushes, leaping over the scrub that barred her path, scrambling over rocks, and all the time throwing startled looks back over her shoulder.

Neither Chal nor Tor could see what had frightened her so. The hunter was now in the ravine and they couldn't see him. And when they did, it was too late to shout to the girl. For Exorse had climbed to the top of the crater rim, and could look down on the fleeing girl.

He raised his light gun.

'Nanina!' shouted Chal. He jumped up. Perhaps he could distract the hunter. Perhaps he could manage to win for Nanina an extra few seconds to get out of range.

But Exorse paid him no attention. He fired... and a beam of light was seen to play over the girl. She seemed to be suddenly helpless in its ray, going rigid, powerless. And as Exorse moved forward with the light gun still trained on her, she moved as he directed her, as though manipulated, without a will of her own.

'He's taken her!' cried Tor in despair.

The two men watched the hunter march back the way he had come, the girl moving unnaturally ahead, as he appeared to drive her before him.

The watchers knew there was nothing they could do.

The Doctor gave his full attention as Jano spoke. Everyone else was silent. They knew how much hung on what their leader said, and more especially how this stranger reacted to it.

'Life lives on other forms of life, as you know, Doctor,' Jano was saying. 'Wild beasts prey on other animals. Mankind must have food, water, oxygen.'

'My dear fellow,' said the Doctor, 'it is obvious to the meanest intellect that you have found some more effective source of energy. Mental, physical, creative.'

'That's true, Doctor.' Jano was choosing his words carefully. 'We have learned how to transfer the energy of life, the basic essence, to ourselves. We can tap it in its purest form. We can recharge ourselves with life's vital force.'

All eyes were on the Doctor. What would he understand by that?

Exorse was leading Nanina from the scrubland. She was trapped in a beam of light, moving forward almost mechanically. In a few more steps they would be out of this wild country and heading for the City.

Chal's voice reached them clearly, a shout from amongst the rocks.

'Leave her, hunter! Leave the girl! Take me in her place.'

It was a despairing cry and Exorse strode on as though he had not heard it.

Jano led the Doctor to a table on the other side of the room. The Elders followed. On it was constructed a complicated model, a mass of equipment, a scientific lay-out of vats, pipes, dials and instruments, such as the Doctor had

never seen in his endless time-travelling. But he quickly analysed the principle that governed the process.

What he didn't yet understand was the reason for the operation.

Jano pointed to the items in turn. 'The life energy which we accumulate we are able to store in power vats such as these, rather as one would store electricity in an old-fashioned battery. Then when the Elders decide that some member of our community is in need of new force, this energy can be transferred directly.'

'Into the person you have selected?' The Doctor wanted to be quite sure he had understood.

'Exactly. In this way we give ourselves new powers, the ability to continue our work, the chances to develop intellectual or artistic genius.'

The Doctor nodded. His thoughts were racing ahead to a question that appalled him. 'You will have to use a very high level of life to make this transfer effective,' he said.

'That is correct,' replied Jano. 'We have to absorb only a very special form of animal vitality.'

The Doctor remembered the brightness, freshness and intelligence of the young people who had welcomed him. What could it be that they had absorbed which had brought them such rewards?

Wherever Flower and Avon took their two guests, music followed them, and the vista always stretched before them in a continuous pattern.of satisfying pictures.

But Flower didn't want them to think life in the city was always serious; it was not like a continuous lecture in a university. 'We play games,' she insisted. 'We go hunting. We dance. Life is very happy. We do what we want, and we go where we want.'

But at that moment Avon called out sharply to Dodo who had fallen behind a few steps, 'Don't go that way!' That rather spoilt the effect Flower was trying to create.

'I thought you said we could go anywhere,' said Dodo.

'It leads to the lands beyond the City,' explained Avon.

'Don't you ever go outside?' Dodo was surprised. 'We're not allowed to,' said Flower.

'There's no need,' added Avon.

'I mean, everything we want is in our City,' said Flower.

'What about the men we met outside?' asked Steven.

'They are guards,' Flower told him.

'To keep back the savages?' asked Dodo.

'The savages?' Avon looked shocked.

'The men in animal skins,' said Dodo.

'Did you see them?'

Dodo nodded, 'Yes. They threw spears at us.' Avon seemed to recover his good spirits. 'Yes,' he admitted, 'the guards are there to control these creatures. That is why we seldom go beyond the City.'

'Let's forget such a dismal subject,' said Flower lightly. 'Come on. We'll show you the stadium. There'll be a celebration there tonight. Especially for you.'

Flower hurried on and Avon followed with Steven. Dodo was about to go after them when she saw a narrow window which appeared to look out to the world beyond. She pressed her face against the glass.

She could just see the rough scrubland they had journeyed through, edged with rocks and bushes. And as she watched, she saw Exorse, the young man who had welcomed them, walking past. He was heading for a fortified door set in the side of the City wall. And ahead of him, walking in a strange fashion, rather like a marionette, was a girl — one of the savages by the look of her, dressed in skins. Dodo watched blankly as they passed. It didn't make sense.

She heard Avon calling, 'Dodo..

'I'm coming,' she said, and hurried after the others.

When she caught up with them, she complained in a whisper to Steven. 'Every time I want to stop and look at something they stop me.'

'You're a guest here,' Steven reproved her. 'Try to behave like one.'

'I hate conducted tours,' said Dodo.

'What kept you?' asked Steven.

'I saw that guard go past. He had a prisoner.' 'That's nonsense,' said Steven. 'They wouldn't have prisoners in a place like this.'

'He had one of those savages with him. A girl. Walking along in front of him.'

'Not trying to escape? Dodo, really.'

'It's true. He was shining some sort of a light on her. Like a torch. And she was somehow gripped by it.'

'Come on, you two,' called Flower.

'They are always so cautious about what they show us,' said Dodo.

'You imagine things,' said Steven, but he began to wonder himself, as they joined the others.

Dodo fell into step beside them, but she had already decided they were not going to find out any really interesting things about the City if it was left to their two hosts.

The door in the City wall had opened as Exorse operated the release mechanism on it, and he moved inside with the girl ahead of him.

Before them lay a corridor leading to another door. For a moment Exorse allowed the light gun to play on the second door. It was as though some support had been removed from Nanina as the light passed from her body. She went limp, almost collapsing, steadying herself against the side of the corridor.

She pleaded faintly, 'Please... Please. Let me go.' But it was as though Exorse had not heard her.

He adjusted the dials beside the door, arranging his personal combination, and a bell rang in the distance.

It sounded on a wall in the central scientific control laboratory, and triggered off a pattern of lights. Just below it were a battery of instruments, pipes and vats, in fact the exact replica of the model the Doctor had already seen. Only in this instance the entire room was full of them, and they were huge.

For the most part, the control room was run automatically and required only a minimum staff. It was supervised by Doctor Senta, a sharp-featured man in his late thirties, intelligent, quick thinking, brisk and efficient. He glanced up at the indicators.

‘Exorse at last, I suppose,’ he grumbled to his assistant. ‘He’s well behind his deadline. I don’t know what’s the matter with security this morning.’

As he spoke, two more assistants came through a glass-panelled swing door. They were guiding a mechanised trolley on which lay the body of a man.

‘Number 4708,’ said one of the assistants. ‘Prepared for discharge. Under the name of Wylda on your records, Doctor Senta.’

‘Hmm.’ Senta glanced at a sheaf of papers in his hand. ‘Very well. Detach and release.’

The assistants began to unfasten a number of grips and connections that had bound the man to the trolley. As they did so he appeared to come slowly back to life with a faint groan.

‘Let Exorse into the second chamber,’ Senta called to his assistant, then turned back to view the man on the trolley with interest, pulling aside a sheet that partly covered him and revealing the skins and rough leather clothes that marked him out as one of the savages from the land beyond the City.

‘What’s the matter with him?’ asked Senta. ‘He seems very depleted. You’ve been warned not to take the process beyond safety levels.’

‘We didn’t, Senta,’ the assistants assured him.

‘Hmm.’ Senta read the dials on the side of the trolley. ‘Vitality 17.4 — I consider that dangerously low. Tell them to follow instructions in there.’ He indicated the laboratory beyond the swing doors. ‘Or do I have to supervise every transfer of energy myself? We don’t want to lose any of our listed individuals, do we?’

He took a quick glance at another dial. ‘Let’s see... Recuperative chart is high. Oh, good. Very well. 4708 will recover.’ He waved the trolley forward as the outer bell started ringing again.

‘These confounded guards,’ said Senta. ‘They’re all the same. They keep you waiting all morning, throwing the entire routine out of gear, then when they do turn up — at any old time — they expect you to give them all of your attention the moment they arrive.’

He waved irritably at Wylda. ‘All right. Take him away. Release him. He’s going to need some assistance.’

The two men swung the man from the platform of the trolley.

‘Take him along corridor K.0.4. Emergency exit. Entrants and exeunts are not supposed to meet. Hurry up there.’

He watched the assistants take the dazed man, feebly staggering on what looked paradoxically like powerful legs, out of the control room. Senta pressed a button on the panel beside him and a section of the wall slid back to reveal a corridor beyond. They edged Wylda into the dimly lit passageway and left him to make his way, arms outstretched, groping like a blind man.

Senta flicked another switch and the main door to the outer waiting rooms swung open. Exorse marched in briskly. Nanina followed, bewildered and exhausted.

‘Sorry about the delay,’ said Exorse.

‘I’m filing a complaint, Exorse,’ said Senta. ‘We’re behind schedule.’ He turned and called over the sound system, ‘Preparation immediately. Number A47.’

Other assistants hurried from the inner laboratory to lead Nanina away.

‘Surely she didn’t give you a great deal of trouble?’ said Senta contemptuously.

‘Of course not,’ said Exorse. ‘That’s not why I’m late. We were delayed by the strangers.’

Senta stopped in his tracks. He was immediately intrigued. ‘Why didn’t you tell me? That changes things completely. Have you seen them?’

‘Captain Edal and I were the first to find them. They were on our patrol. We brought them back.’

‘That changes things completely,’ repeated Senta. ‘Very excusable...’ He couldn’t get over his surprise. ‘You’ve actually seen them? What are they like?’

‘Very like us,’ said Exorse, ‘in some ways.’ ‘And different in others?’

Exorse was a little puzzled. ‘Yes,’ he said thoughtfully. ‘But I can’t quite say exactly how.’

Senta nodded. ‘Well, we shall analyse that soon enough.’

Exorse raised his hand in salutation and turned to go. As the door closed behind him, Senta turned to the video panel on his desk. ‘Check the lab,’ he said, and the screen showed Nanina, strapped to another trolley, being manoeuvred into a recess below the intricate vats.

‘Seems all right,’ mused Senta, ‘check K.0.4.’ The darkened corridor showed up on the screen. Wylda moved into the frame, eyes glazed, hands feeling along the smooth sides on the passageway.

‘Very good,’ said Senta. ‘I was right. He’ll survive.’

He switched off the scanner and passed a hand over his brow. ‘They really put the pressure on this place. Always on my shift. Always Tuesday mornings.’

Steven was genuinely delighted by all he was shown. They moved from one colonnaded aisle to another. Everything was colourful, light, and airy. He had not expected to be so enthralled.

‘What a fabulous city this is. The fountains playing... Always the sound of music... Everything charming.’

His appreciation was so real that both Avon and Flower competed to show him more, and they were inclined to neglect his companion.

Dodo had proved less enthusiastic. She had trailed along behind, perhaps a little critical, always asking questions that confused them. Even now they paid her little attention.

If the truth were known she was rather bored — and a bit suspicious of all the gaiety and splendid scenes. There seemed to be something superficial about it all.

She was surprised and delighted when she saw someone she thought she recognised. Down a short side aisle, a section of the wall had moved aside, and a young man stepped out. She saw it was Exorse, and she was about to call to him. He had been more interesting than these two, she thought. But she stopped herself. Where had Exorse come from? Why had he hurried away? She saw the others were paying her no attention, so she slipped quietly down the little aisle to where the wall section had opened. On the side, just about head height, were a series of buttons. She reached up and pressed one.

She could hear Avon’s voice in the distance saying, ‘Yes, we are very proud of our creation.’

And Steven could be heard replying, ‘Why is it only here in the City that you have such wonderful conditions?’

‘Where else?’ asked Flower.

‘What about the place we landed in... The country out there?’

‘We told you,’ said Avon. ‘All we need is here.’ The section in the wall slid back, and Dodo saw the dim tunnel beyond. She couldn’t see where it led to, but there seemed to be a number of doors further down the corridor with a panel of lights.

She hesitated.

Then she heard Avon’s voice droning away. On an impulse, she stepped into the corridor. The wall slipped into place behind her. She was shut in, and was suddenly very alarmed. What had she done? And then she saw the corridor led to a T-junction with a series of dim lights showing the way. She set off gingerly towards it.

Senta decided that this time he would supervise the transference himself, and he went through to the main laboratory.

The girl was already connected via the energy absorbers to the accumulator system. Senta checked the dials and switches for, although his assistants were very thorough, the final responsibility was his. Besides, he didn’t want another near fatality like the last operation. The dials clicked smoothly into place. The noise of powerful machinery hummed into life. Efficient and effective as usual, he thought. He was about to turn on the activate process when the girl on the platform opened her eyes and looked up at him. Normally they were in a state of coma by this stage, but she was conscious.

‘Please.. please...’ That was all she said. It was almost a sort of prayer. But Senta seemed unaware of it. He flicked over the switch.

Her eyes closed. Life seemed to drain from her.... From both her brain and her body.

The conference in the Council Chamber had reached a crucial stage. Jano appeared to be making a great impression on the Doctor and that was what everyone had hoped for. the junction into the main corridor. As she did she choked back a cry.

Someone was lurching towards her: a gruesome figure, just a few yards away, one of those frightening savages she had seen in the ravine near the TARDIS. A man in animal skins, a strange, wild expression on his face, eyes blank as though he was unable to see what lay ahead.

Perhaps he couldn’t see her properly. She thought this might be her only chance... If she drew herself close against the side of the tunnel, there might be enough room for him to pass without touching her. Because she guessed that if he sensed she was there — a wild savage like that, with that look of desperation on his face...

All she could do was to hold her breath as he stumbled nearer... Hold her breath and press tightly against the wall! The very sound of him, the hands reaching forward, the frantic look, all filled her with alarm.

‘So you see, Doctor,’ he said, ‘we have the power to make the wise man wiser, the strong man stronger, the brave man braver. And we can make the most beautiful girl more beautiful yet. You will realise that with such advantages, what we have in our power is the perfection of our race.’

The Doctor looked at him thoughtfully. As usual, he didn't give away all that was in his mind, but he said, 'In other words, you think you may have found the secret of eternal life?'

Jano nodded gravely. 'I believe you have understood,' he said.

It was Flower who first realised that Dodo was no longer with them. She turned to speak to her. 'Come and look at this, Dodo..

'Yes, Dodo...' called Steven.

They looked around blankly. There was no sign of her. One moment she had been there, and the next she had vanished.

'Where is she?' said Steven.

They all started calling, 'Dodo... Dodo..

The way behind them was clear. There seemed no place for her to hide.

'Dodo... Where are you? Come on, don't fool about...' Steven was suddenly very anxious. He hurried back down the aisles calling, but there was no answer.

Dodo moved softly towards the T-junction. As she got closer she thought she could hear a faint sound, as though someone were shuffling towards her. It was an eerie noise, and there was someone breathing. She stopped for a moment, but, as usual with Dodo, curiosity got the better of her fears, and she edged round

4 'I Don't Know What's Going On, But I Don't Like It'

All Dodo's fears had been unnecessary. The frightening figure that came on unsteadily towards her did not pause, but stumbled past, fighting for breath.

Dodo gazed at him, bewildered, her fear changing to pity as she saw the wretched state he was in. But he didn't even seem to notice her, all his scant energy was being concentrated on just keeping alive, keeping moving, struggling to reach some safe goal.

She watched him pass slowly by, swaying against the wall, heading for the end of the corridor.

It looked to Dodo as though it was a dead end, but as the man passed a light beam on the ceiling he triggered off a mechanism, and the end wall of the corridor began to slide away and the sunlight of the real world glowed beyond.

But before the man reached the exit the effort became too much.

Dodo saw his knees buckle and he pitched forward on the ground a few feet from the open doorway. He tried to get up, but he sank back with a groan, then lay very still. Dodo hurried towards him, and, as she reached the fallen man, he opened his eyes and looked up. She couldn't understand the terror that crossed his face as she bent over him, but he was too helpless to move away.

She put an arm under his shoulders and struggled to lift him.

He opened his eyes again and stared at her in amazement.

'Come on,' she encouraged him. 'You can do it.' Gradually she got him upright, and steadied him against the wall.

She was very touched by his brave struggle, and took his arm, leading him to the open door. He was shaking like a very old man. As they progressed, he seemed to become more aware of her, still glancing at her, unable to understand that she could be helping him. Once he tried to speak, but he didn't have the strength.

The last few steps were a great effort and he was almost collapsing as they reached the open air. Then Dodo stopped and let him move away by himself. He took another few steps, looking as if he were about to fall. Dodo was startled to

see two figures rush from the bushes to catch him. They were two of the savages she had seen before, and both were carrying weapons.

One of them turned to her threateningly, as though to tell her to stay where she was. Both looked at her with a bitterness she could not understand.

For a moment it looked as though they might still attack, but the sick man caught one man's arm and shook his head. Neither seemed to understand why he stopped them, but they turned and half-carried, half-dragged him into the ragged scrubland.

Dodo watched them go, unable to understand what any of this could mean. She was still in the open doorway when she heard the throbbing of some mechanism and she stepped back into the shelter of the corridor just as the door closed. A long tunnel lay before her. In the distance she heard the hum of a dynamo. The other end of the corridor seemed better lit, and she moved off cautiously towards it.

The trolley with its living subject attached to it fitted neatly into the cubicle designed for it. Senta took over the operation, pressing the range of controls before him and watching the transparent panels close round the girl. At the touch of another control, the cabinet began to fill with a white, gassy substance. It was necessary to peer closely through the haze to keep an eye on developments. Senta adjusted the special viewer on the panel, and was satisfied that all went according to their well-tried routine.

He then carefully spun the wheel that controlled the final process and a steady stream of life-giving bubbles began to pass through the liquid.

Beside Senta, two large vats were filled with a thick black liquid. The bubbles filtered into these, and slowly the dark liquid began to clear. All was going well.

A strange sound like bubbles bursting through water puzzled Dodo as she made her way along the corridor. It seemed to come from a multitude of pipes that ran along the top of the wall. As she got closer to the panels at the end of the corridor the noise grew louder. It was very intriguing. She stopped outside the door. The noise within was quite distinct.

She hesitated, scanning the panel round the door. There must be some way in.

Concern turned to alarm as Steven, Avon, and Flower retraced their steps for the third time, calling Dodo's name, looking everywhere, asking bystanders, but getting nowhere. No one had seen the Girl From Beyond Time.

'Could she be playing a joke?' asked Avon nervously.

'Could it be just a game?'

'Not even Dodo would be as silly as that,' said Steven grimly. They came to a stop. 'Something must have happened to her,' he said.

'But nothing can happen to anyone in the City. We are all safe here.'

'Then where is she?' Steven was getting angry with such reassurance.

He shouted loudly up and down the splendid aisles: 'Dodo! Dodo!' There wasn't even an echo.

The panel beside the door was simple to understand, and Dodo quickly realised the combination that would open the door. But she hesitated for a moment, wondering what she might see on the other side. She had an unpleasant feeling. After all, that must have been the place the sick man had been. But once

again her curiosity got the better of her. She tried the combination and the door opened.

She stepped in. At first she was disappointed: she had entered what looked like a small, glass-panelled, waiting room, brightly lit. She went smartly through it and as she stepped out she came to a sudden stop.

The scene before her was one of busy and efficient activity. The room looked like a vast laboratory, an experimental scientific institution, or perhaps part of a very modern hospital. A short distance away, some men dressed in protective uniforms were clustered round a cabinet recessed into some impressive equipment. She couldn't see what they were doing as a cloud of white vapour drifted about inside the cabinet.

The man in charge was adjusting a number of instruments, turning a wheel, changing the reading on some dials, and keeping an eye on some great vats of inky liquid that stood beside him.

From where she stood, partly hidden in the waiting room, Dodo saw the inky substance getting a shade lighter. Something was bubbling through it that seemed to be purifying it. She stood entranced, absolutely absorbed by the process. She realised that everyone else in the room was equally concentrated on the same activity.

She wondered what on earth they could be doing, and she gradually edged a step or two nearer. No one seemed to notice the figure in the doorway. The low hum of the dynamo, the rhythmic bubbling of the liquid in the great vats, the gradual change in the colour — it was all quite hypnotic. She had to find out what was happening inside that cabinet. What held the little group's attention so? If she moved round behind them, perhaps she'd be able to see. She tip-toed very gently behind the group.

Lights flickered up and down the panels above the Supervisor's table. Things seemed to be speeding up.

The meeting in the Conference Room was going well. The Elders were beginning to congratulate themselves. Jano had put their philosophy very clearly indeed. The Doctor seemed impressed, listening, asking the occasional question, admittedly not giving much away, with a dry, unchanging expression on his face.

But he still listened.

'So you see, Doctor,' said Jano, 'with this new vigour our intellectuals find they are able to accomplish more. Artists are able to turn out works of brilliance. In this way we have achieved this world you so approved of. And every citizen has an equal chance..

The door of the room was thrown open as Steven ran in. He was very agitated.

'I must see you, Doctor.'

'My dear boy,' the Doctor was surprised. 'You really mustn't come bursting in like this.'

'Dodo has gone,' said Steven.

'Gone? What do you mean... Gone?'

'She's completely vanished. We've looked everywhere.'

Behind him Avon and Flower appeared in the open doorway.

'What are we to understand by this, Avon?' asked Jano sternly.

'It's true,' said Avon.

‘She has vanished into thin air,’ said Flower.

‘I can’t see what all the fuss is about,’ said the Doctor. ‘She’ll turn up. I don’t suppose anything awful can happen to anyone in a City as well managed as this.’ He looked quizzically at Jano.

Jano shook his head thoughtfully. ‘You are right. She cannot leave the City.’

‘And I know that young lady,’ said the Doctor. ‘She’ll be all right. She can look after herself.’ He didn’t seem the slightest disturbed.

Dodo could now hear some of the muttered conversation around the cubicle.

The man in charge said, ‘Reduce extraction rate,’ and one of the assistants repeated the order into a voice system. The rate of flow seemed to check, and the sound of bubbles changed gear.

‘The subject looks very weak,’ said the same man, and everyone peered into the clearing gassy substance. Dodo tried to do the same, standing on her tip-toes, leaning as far forward as she dared.

She was so involved she didn’t notice that she had stepped from behind her cover. One of the assistants had turned away, and to his amazement he saw this stranger looking on. He said nothing, but gradually began to move round the room behind the others. She didn’t notice as he came up slowly at her back.

Senta was calling out instructions. ‘Vitality reading?’ he asked.

‘Twenty-six,’ called his assistant.

What could that mean, wondered Dodo. She intended to find out. She took a step nearer the transparent cubicle, and, as she did so, an arm was thrown round her, and a hand clamped roughly over her mouth. She tried to struggle and shout, but she could do neither.

She couldn’t see who was holding her, but a second man saw her, and ran to grab her arms. Together the two men dragged her from the room, pulling her into an alcove; it looked to Dodo like an office.

‘Who is she?’ one man was asking. ‘What is she doing here?’

The man behind her said, ‘She must be from outside. See if she’s on the list.’

Dodo managed to jerk away as the men glanced through a heap of papers on a desk. ‘What do you think you’re doing?’ she said angrily. ‘Leave me alone!’ She tried to free her arms, but they were pinioned to her sides.

The man at the desk frowned over the lists. ‘She doesn’t seem to be here.’

He turned to look at her. ‘Why’s she wearing such strange clothes?’ He fingered Dodo’s dress as she spoke.

She managed to free one arm and pushed him away. ‘Keep your hands to yourself!’ she said indignantly.

‘I don’t understand this,’ said the assistant. ‘There’s only one female on the list and she’s in there now.’

‘Are you sure she’s here for transference?’ asked the other man.

‘She must be. Is there any other reason?’

One of them signalled to a third man still in the laboratory, and he came in a moment later bringing one of the strange trollies Dodo had seen outside.

‘Get her ready,’ the first assistant ordered.

She tried to kick and struggle, but the odds were against her. At close range the trolley with its mass of odd-looking equipment was alarming. She fought harder, but they dragged her towards it.

Steven didn't like Captain Edal's manner, but at least he was efficient, and he felt that with him they had a chance of finding out what had happened to Dodo.

They had returned to the spot where she had last been seen, and Edal checked the window.

'She stopped to look out of there,' said Flower.

Edal shook his head. 'It's far too small. She couldn't have got out that way.' He turned angrily to Avon. 'You should have watched her. You will be held responsible.'

'We thought she was following us,' protested Avon. Edal suddenly stopped and looked up at the wall. 'Did she come down here?' he asked.

'Yes.' Avon glanced at the indicators on the wall. 'But she wouldn't go through there.'

'Why not?' said Edal sharply.

He pressed the release catches and the panel opened. Steven looked at the corridor beyond in surprise. 'Where does that go?'

'It's nothing,' said Flower. 'We never use it. It's for the guards.'

'You don't know Dodo,' said Steven. 'She'd go anywhere.'

'If she's taken that road,' said Edal, 'I don't give much for her chances.'

'She wouldn't,' said Flower. 'It's not allowed.'

'If it's not allowed,' said Steven, 'then Dodo would be first in the queue. I'll have a look.'

He stepped quickly into the corridor before anyone had time to stop him.

'Stay where you are!' ordered Edal.

Senta looked up from his control panel as he heard one of the assistants call, 'Senta... Senta, something is happening. We have one of the outsiders. We are trying to prepare her. But she does not submit. She is fighting.'

'Impossible,' said Senta.

'She is over there, sir,' shouted the assistant. 'In the control office.'

'Take over,' Senta directed his assistant. He hurried into the office.

He arrived just in time to see Dodo throw herself to one side, dodge round the trolley away from the two assistants, and wedge herself behind a battery of files.

'I don't know what's going on here,' she said angrily, 'but whatever it is, I don't like it.'

They all looked at her in amazement. Never before had they had such opposition. It was hard to know what to do about it.

They made a rush to try to corner her.

'Oh no, you don't,' said Dodo. She grabbed the trolley and used it to defend herself, ramming at anyone who tried to get near. 'I don't know who you think I am but —' She spun round to see the third man trying to get behind her. She sent the trolley spinning across towards him, then snatched up a panel of instruments from the top of the filing cabinet.

'I imagine this little lot is worth a packet,' she said grimly, 'and if any of you come one step nearer it's all going to be junk.'

They hesitated, looking to Senta for a lead. He tried to take command.

'What do you think you will achieve —' he began. Dodo cut him short. 'Just back off,' she said, 'or I smash the lot.'

Senta gazed at her, baffled, then signalled to the others to move away. ‘Do as she says,’ he whispered. ‘If she breaks that, she may kill us all.’

It looked for a moment as if there was going to be a shouting match between Steven and Captain Edal.

Steven didn’t like being ordered about, and he saw no reason why he should not search this darkened corridor. He knew it was just the sort of place to attract Dodo with her insatiable curiosity. But Edal forcibly pulled him back.

‘Did you not hear?’ asked the Captain sharply. ‘You are not allowed in there.’

‘It’s the only place she can be,’ protested Steven angrily.

‘Then I shall go and see,’ said Edal, and he disappeared into the corridor, leaving Steven fuming with Avon and Flower.

Edal knew his way and headed directly for the sound of a powerful dynamo and the noise of some. thing bubbling through liquids.

It was a state of impasse in the Control Office. Senta had reason to think again. This was not the behaviour of the people of the scrubland. Nor were these the clothes they wore.

‘Who are you?’ he asked, puzzled.

‘You should have asked that before,’ said Dodo.

‘I’m supposed to be a guest here. Though if this is the way you treat your guests, I’m not sure I want to stay.’

‘A guest?’ Senta had a sense of apprehension.

‘I’m with the Doctor. The Traveller From Beyond Time, you call him.’

‘It isn’t possible,’ said one of the assistants. ‘It certainly is,’ said Dodo firmly.

‘Then how are you here?’ asked Senta. ‘In this place?’ He indicated the laboratory.

The door of the office burst open. An assistant looked in anxiously. ‘Senta, quickly. The subject.’

Senta hurried out, shouting over his shoulder, ‘Stay here everybody.’

He reckoned he got back to transference control just in the nick of time. One glance at the dials and he knew just how close this subject was to complete extinction. Good grief, he thought. Two near mishaps on the same shift. And usually nothing went wrong. It seemed to Senta like a black omen, and if the truth were known he was inclined to be superstitious — although that was considered to be quite ridiculous in the City.

He spun the dials, and shouted into the speaker, ‘Disconnect!’ As he did so, he heard another voice calling, ‘Dodo!’ One quick glance towards the entrance and he saw Captain Edal burst in. Then Senta turned his full attention to salvaging the energy-subject on the transference extractor, and that took all his experience and quick thinking.

But he heard Edal behind him saying in amazement, ‘What are you doing here?’ and the girl replied, ‘I just came through the door up there, and it closed behind me.’

As he worked furiously Senta shouted, ‘I shall report this. The whole matter. How can we be expected to carry out our work? Who is supposed to be in charge of the visiting party?’

Edal didn’t answer, but asked in return, ‘What has _ she seen?’

‘Who knows?’ barked Senta. ‘But the Elders will certainly be told about this.’

‘The Elders have already been told,’ said Edal coldly.

‘Get her out of here,’ shouted Senta.

‘I already have my orders,’ said Edal. He turned to Dodo. ‘Follow me. This way.’

Dodo was unwilling to go before she understood what had been the centre of so much excitement. She pointed to the huge vats. ‘All these instruments,’ she said, ‘what are they for? Those glass things over there. Those things like trollies... What do they do in here?’

‘We must hurry,’ said Edal sharply. ‘The Elders are waiting. And your own Doctor.’

Dodo still dragged her feet.

‘Move her,’ shouted Senta. ‘We’re disconnecting.’

The trolley was now being backed out of the recess in which it had played its part during the activity.

Dodo would dearly have liked to have seen it, but Edal stood in her way, then backed her out of the laboratory.

She had gone before the assistants hurriedly made the necessary detachments, and unclamped the limp body from the platform.

Senta hurried to make an inspection, checking the readings on the dials against her head. His chief assistant sidled in beside him. ‘Too late?’ he asked in a whisper.

Senta shook his head with relief. ‘Not quite.’ They knew there would be an inquiry, and a reprimand, to say the least, if they lost a future source of energy.

‘We’ve been lucky twice this morning. Make. a record in her data bank. It must be some considerable time before we extract from her again. She will need months before there is life energy available.’

His assistant made an immediate note.

5 ‘The Old Man Did Not Obey’

Steven watched Captain Edal usher Dodo from the panel in the corridor with a mixture of feelings. He was greatly relieved, but he was also very angry at all the anxiety she had caused.

‘Don’t you start now,’ warned Dodo when she saw him.

‘What happened? I mean, how the devil did you manage to vanish, to stand this whole city on its head, Elders and all?’

‘You won’t believe it,’ said Dodo. ‘But I was attacked by some sort of a mad doctor.’

‘What?’

‘Well, more than one mad doctor. Several of his assistants as well. All trying to get me onto the operating table by the look of things.’

Steven looked at her incredulously.

‘It’s true,’ insisted Dodo. ‘They tried to tie me up.’ Flower was startled. ‘That’s a ridiculous story. You shouldn’t say such things.’

‘Do you know what goes on in there?’ asked Dodo. ‘I don’t suppose you’ve even seen the place. Is it a sort of hospital?’

‘Exactly,’ said Avon hurriedly. ‘That’s precisely what it is. A hospital.’

‘Perhaps they thought you were a patient,’ said Flower.

Dodo gave her a baleful look. ‘Then I should hate to be a patient in their hands.’

Captain Edal turned to her. ‘You must have a reason to say that,’ he said. ‘I’d like to know what it is.’

‘Just a feeling,’ said Dodo.

‘What exactly did you see there?’ asked Edal.

Dodo shrugged. ‘Nothing really. But what a terrible place. All that huge equipment — so sterile, inhuman.’

‘She always gets feelings like that,’ said Steven. ‘She imagines things.’

‘This is all very depressing,’ said Flower. ‘I know exactly the place to go to cheer ourselves up.’

They started to move off with her, but Captain Edal bowed stiffly to Flower. ‘You must make a report to the Elders,’ he said. ‘That must be done first. There has been negligence, and that must be answered for.’ Both Avon and Flower turned a shade paler.

‘I hope I haven’t landed you in trouble,’ whispered Dodo.

The other two tried to shrug it off. ‘We’ll be all right,’ said Flower.

‘Of course we will,’ said Avon. ‘We must leave you now. Perhaps we shall see you later.’

But when they were alone together their brave faces changed.

‘What will happen to us, Avon?’ asked Flower ‘Do you think they might take us along that corridor...’ She shuddered.

‘Of course not,’ he replied. ‘That’s only for the savages.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Yes. We’ll be all right. This is a free state. We are all equal. They have no right to do anything like that — tous.’

‘I hope you’re right,’ said Flower.

Avon took her arm as the girl was trembling.

At the same time Steven was watching Dodo anxiously. ‘Got over it, have you?’ he asked.

‘I have now,’ she said. ‘But it was nasty at the time.’

‘I told you not to go off by yourself,’ he said. ‘Don’t worry. I won’t do it again,’ she said with feeling.

The lab staff got Nanina clear of the equipment although she was so weak she couldn’t help herself.

‘You are to go,’ Senta told her. ‘You understand? Go.’

She blinked at him vaguely, and finally Senta had to send an assistant part of the way with her.

It had been a dreadful day, and he was getting a headache.

The Doctor had been proved right as usual. He had said Dodo could look after herself, and here she was as right as rain.

‘You had everybody in a great state,’ he told her when she and Steven and their two young hosts returned to the Conference Chamber.

‘I have to speak to you, Doctor,’ said Dodo. ‘I must tell you what happened.’

But the Doctor put her off almost casually. ‘Not just now, my dear.’

‘I think you ought to listen to her,’ whispered Steven.

‘Do you, my boy?’ The Doctor was being irritating, waving them both aside. ‘Well, I’m afraid I can’t just now. I’m having a most interesting discussion with

these learned gentlemen.' He indicated the Elders who clustered round. He seemed to be struck with a fresh thought as he ignored his fellow travellers and addressed Jano. 'You know, sir, I think I have one or two documents which would interest you a great deal. Records of my investigations into time-travel. They might surprise you.'

'You have them with you, Doctor?'

'In the TARDIS. I'll select the most intriguing. It won't take more than a minute..

'You want to return to your spaceship, Doctor?' Jano seemed doubtful.

'As I say, it won't take long.' The Doctor was already on his feet, adjusting his flowing black tie, tucking his thumbs into his loose waistcoat.

'I'll come with you,' said Steven.

'Very well,' said the Doctor readily. 'I shall need someone to carry a few things.'

'We can send one of the guards with you,' said Jano.

'Not necessary,' said the Doctor airily. He turned to Dodo.

'And you come along too, Dodo. We don't want to lose you again, do we?'

He didn't wait for further discussion but marched away with his young friends, watched suspiciously by the others in the Council Chamber.

'What do you think, Captain?' asked Jano. 'I'm not sure, sir,' said Edal.

'What did that girl see? Anything of importance?' 'It meant nothing to her,' said Edal. 'I made sure of that.'

'But she suspects?'

'She's just a young girl, sir. What could she suspect? I'm much more concerned about the Doctor. How did he react to what you told him?'

'He's a very sophisticated man,' said Jano thoughtfully. 'He doesn't give away what his true thoughts are. I know what he says... I don't know what he thinks.'

'Then it would be wise to keep an eye on him,' suggested Edal.

The Captain saluted and hurried to follow the three strangers. As he reached the outside of the City he could see them entering the scrubland. They hadn't gone far, and would not be difficult to follow.

The Doctor strode on through the scrub with Dodo and Steven almost trotting at his heels.

'Why didn't you let me tell you what happened?' complained Dodo.

'Not there, my child,' said the Doctor. 'I didn't want any of those other gentlemen to hear.'

'Jano and the Elders?'

'Precisely.'

'Don't you trust them?'

'Not entirely.'

'Have you discovered something to make you doubt them?' asked Steven.

'I'm really not quite sure,' said the Doctor cautiously. 'I shall have to give the situation a little more attention before I get to the truth, I think. One thing I am sure of — things here are not exactly what they seem.'

'In what way?'

'They don't feel right... Something is wrong... Perhaps very wrong.'

Steven suddenly grabbed his arm. 'Look out!'

‘Savages!’ called Dodo. She backed away, but Steven and the Doctor held their ground. Just a few steps ahead a figure could be seen behind the bushes. It didn’t move.

‘He could be armed, Doctor,’ warned Dodo as the

Doctor moved slowly round the bush, nearer the

motionless figure. They could now see it was a man.

‘Why doesn’t he move?’ asked Steven. They expected him to attack or to run, not just to stay still in a strange posture as though leaning on the bush.

‘Let’s have a look,’ called the Doctor. He went quickly round the bush, and as he did so the man seemed to make a great effort, straightened himself, then suddenly collapsed to the ground. Dodo came running round to join them.

‘I know him,’ she said. ‘That’s the man I helped. He was in the corridor outside the room with the huge vats. What’s happened to him, Doctor? We must do something.’

All three squatted round the figure. It was indeed Wylda, the man Dodo had seen. The Doctor began to examine him.

Was he in this condition when you saw him?’ he asked Dodo. She nodded.

‘And he’d come from where?’

‘Some sort of laboratory, I think,’ she told him. ‘What’s wrong with him?’

‘Do you know, Doctor?’ asked Steven.

The Doctor was very tight-lipped. ‘I fear I do,’ he said.

‘Fear?’

‘For all their wonderful civilisation,’ said the Doctor bitterly, ‘their progress is based on this.’ He pointed at the man lying on the ground.

‘What do you mean?’

‘It seems they have discovered some way of taking the life force from one individual and transferring it to another, to chosen people of their own. These other poor beings are used as fodder. Spiritual and mental fodder. While the essence of their existence is drained away periodically into, I suppose, those vats you saw, Dodo. While their victims come close — very close — to death.’

But Dodo was not so concerned with the Doctor’s tirade as with the state of the poor fellow on the ground. ‘Is there anything we can do to help him, Doctor? To bring him back to life?’

The Doctor looked up sharply. ‘There is.’ He took a key from his pocket and handed it to Steven. ‘This will open the emergency locker in the TARDIS. You will find a container of capsules marked D403. Bring it and I think we might be able to save him. But hurry, both of you.’

Dodo and Steven raced off through the rocky countryside. The Doctor looked back at Wylda.

‘Let’s see if we can’t make you a little more comfortable, my friend.’ He moved the fallen man so that he rested easily. Wylda looked at the Doctor blankly as he helped him.

We’ll have you on your feet in no time,’ went on the Doctor. ‘Stay where you are, old man. Lie still.’ Wylda was trying to get up. ‘Breathe steadily. I’ll give you the rhythm: one... two..

He looked up as he heard Edal’s voice. ‘Do you require any assistance, Doctor?’

‘I think I can manage,’ said the Doctor flatly. ‘What have we here?’ asked Edal. He tapped the body on the ground with his foot.

‘I imagine you know quite a bit about this.’ The Doctor spoke accusingly.

‘He’s clearly one of the savages,’ said Edal casually. ‘Don’t let him worry you, Doctor. He should be back in the Reserve by now. He’s probably shamming, lazy great brute. Get up. Back to your sty.’ He gave the dazed man a heavy kick.

The Doctor jumped to his feet. ‘What do you think you’re doing? If he moves he may die.’

‘Not much chance of that,’ grinned Edal. ‘They’re as tough as old boots, these rascals.’ He turned back to Wylda. ‘Come on. You heard. On your feet. Quick, march! Up!’

The man was trying to raise himself. He sank back

and Edal urged him up with another rap with his foot. ‘Leave him alone!’ said the Doctor angrily. ‘What?’ Edal blinked at him.

‘I insist,’ said the Doctor.

‘I don’t think you understand the situation,’ said Edal slowly.

‘I understand it a little too clearly,’ said the Doctor grimly.

‘You do?’ Edal blinked again. ‘And you still waste time and effort on this semi-creature?’

‘This human being,’ said the Doctor firmly.

The Captain looked at the Doctor’s outraged expression with surprise. ‘What’s the matter, Doctor? Why all this concern? They’re only savages, you know.’

‘They are men,’ said the Doctor, unable to hide his anger. ‘Like you and me’.

‘Oh come, Doctor.’ Edal was amused.

‘Although,’ went on the Doctor, ‘at this moment it seems to me he’s more of a real human being than you are yourself.’

Edal tried to explain. After all, this Doctor was a stranger. Perhaps he didn’t understand the facts of life. ‘You’re off on the wrong tack, Doctor,’ he said. ‘These people... this species... they haven’t developed like we have. They’re a different breed... Savages’. He pushed Wylda over with his foot.

‘I forbid you to touch him,’ said the Doctor.

Edal turned on him, suddenly menacing. ‘You mean, you’re obstructing me, Doctor?’

‘I’m looking after this wretched fellow,’ said the Doctor. ‘I’ve taken responsibility for him.’

‘If that’s the case,’ said Edal, ‘I’m afraid I must ask you to come with me.’

‘I’ve told you,’ said the Doctor, ‘I’m attending to this fellow. Now please get out of my way.’

‘I warned you,’ said Edal. He had his light gun in his harness. He brought it up and trained it on the Doctor. ‘You will do as I ordered.’

The Doctor paid him not the slightest attention, busying himself over Wylda. ‘Hmm?’ he said.

Edal fired. The light played over the Doctor and he became limp, helpless in its rays.

And as they moved off — the Doctor a captive in an invisible grip — Wylda lifted his head to watch, realisation beginning to dawn.

How much longer he lay there he wasn't sure, before he heard the sound of footsteps running, and a girl's voice calling, 'Are you sure you know where you are?'

Steven's voice replied, 'Just a little bit further.' They stopped dead in their tracks as they saw Wylda lying by the side of the bush.

'Where's the Doctor?' asked Dodo.

Wylda could give no proper answer, only a faint moan.

'Doctor! Doctor!' shouted Steven. They looked over the bleak scrubland. There was no movement, and no reply.

'What do we do?' asked Dodo.

'Better give him the capsules.' Steven indicated the man on the ground.

'What about the Doctor?'

'You know what he's like. Unpredictable. He'll turn up.'

Dodo knelt by the sick man. She tried to make him take one of the capsules they had brought from the TARDIS, but he resisted.

'Come on,' she said. 'Take it. Trust the Doctor.'

The man swallowed the little pill. A moment later some of the pain seemed to ease from his face, and he sank back with a sigh.

'That seems to have done him good,' said Dodo. 'Shall I give him the other one?'

'Might as well,' agreed Steven.

They were too occupied to notice the silent activity in the bushes behind them. Chal and Tor approached at the head of a little band of their fellows — half -a dozen other men, dressed as they were, in animal skins, and carrying spears and other primitive weapons. They moved towards the two strangers cautiously, spears at the ready, determined to attack.

They were almost on top of the two youngsters when Dodo stood up. She gripped Steven's arm, and he turned to see the terrifying sight as the savages moved in.

For a moment the savages stopped and whispered together, seeing Wylda on the ground.

'We must be careful not to hit him,' said Tor. 'We can save him without killing them,' said Chal. 'We could do it,' Tor urged. 'I'll aim for the man.

You go for the girl.'

'No,' said Chal. 'We must not kill. Think what the guards would do to us later.'

'They have no light guns,' said Tor. 'It would be safe. It would be a just revenge.'

But Chal was not to be persuaded. 'Revenge does no good,' he said.

'Let us wait no longer,' said Tor, 'or Wylda may die.'

'It may be a trap,' whispered Chal.

Steven and Dodo could hear the whispers, but couldn't make out what was being said.

'We'll have to run for it,' said Dodo.

'Which way?' said Steven 'Back to the City?' 'That's the last place I want to see again,' said Dodo.

'Think we could make it to the TARDIS?' 'We could try,' said Steven.

The tribe of savages was fanning out. The half-circle around Dodo and Steven now made it harder for them to back away.

'Don't let them see you're afraid,' said Steven.

'Who's afraid?' said Dodo, and the next second she gave a piercing scream. One of the savages came round a rock almost beside her. She scrambled behind Steven as the man raised his spear to throw.

'Kill them!' shouted Tor. It looked as though the savages were going to ignore Chal's warning as they raced forward.

'No, leave them. Do not kill.'

They stopped in the act of hurling their weapons as they heard a voice from the ground. Wylda was making a great effort to speak. He raised his hand to ask them to stay where they were.

'Do not kill,' he said again.

'Wylda speaks,' called Chal.

The savages strained forward to catch his whispered words.

'They... are... friends,' said Wylda.

The savages looked with disbelief at Steven and Dodo.

'What do you do here?' said Chal fiercely. 'What did you give him to eat?'

'We gave medicine,' said Steven.

They looked at him suspiciously. 'Why medicine?' 'Because he is sick,' said Steven.

'What do you care if he is sick?' called Tor. 'You are from the City.'

'No, we are not,' said Dodo defiantly.

'You must come from the City,' said Chal.

'We come from another place,' said Steven. He guessed his and Dodo's lives might hang on this argument.

'We have seen you,' persisted Tor. He pointed to Dodo. 'You were in the City doorway.'

'We were taken there,' said Steven.

'You have friends in the City,' said Chal. If you have friends there you are as they are. You take our lives, slowly, year by year.'

There was a wave of anger in the little crowd. They quietened only as Wylda spoke again. 'She helped me. They all helped me. And the old man spoke against the City ways.'

'He means the Doctor,' said Steven. He looked down at Wylda. 'Do you know where he is?' 'They have taken him,' said Wylda.

'Who has?'

'The guard captain. Took him in the power of the light gun.'

'You mean, they've taken him a prisoner?' 'Yes. To the City.'

Dodo looked at Steven with a frown. 'Why would anyone do that?' Steven shook his head.

'The old man was angry,' said Wylda. 'He tried to help me. The Captain was angry also and gave orders. The old man did not obey.'

'He never does,' said Steven. He turned to look towards the City.

6 'Not Exactly A Witness'

The Doctor was more than a little put out by his treatment. And also by the lecture he received from Jano, who spoke to him as if he were a naughty child.

‘We do not understand you, Doctor,’ he said. ‘You took our honours gladly enough. So how can you now condemn this great artistic and scientific civilisation of ours? It isn’t logical. And all this fuss you make about a few wretched barbarians.’

‘I see.’ The Doctor drew himself up to his full height, fingers inside his crumpled jacket. ‘Your honours are only for those who agree with you and all you do?’

‘Of course not.’ Jano made everything sound reasonable. ‘But it looks as if you are set to oppose us.

‘Oppose you!’ The Doctor was indignant. ‘Of course I’m going to oppose you! Just as I have opposed the Daleks, and this, that, and the other, that may have menaced common humanity through the annals of space and time. That is, if you don’t hurry up and change your ways.’

The Elders, Jano, and the Guards looked at him with amazement. This solitary old man was prepared to stand alone against them, against their powerful community. It was incredible! ‘This is most unscientific of you,’ said Jano. ‘I am sorry you take this stand. It is an obstacle in the way of human progress.’

The Doctor was further outraged. ‘How dare you call your treatment of these people "human progress"!’

‘They are hardly people,’ said Jano. ‘They are not like us.’

‘I fail to see the difference,’ said the Doctor coldly.

Jano felt he had one last duty to try to explain: ‘You must realise, Doctor, that all progress is built on exploitation of some sort.’

‘Exploitation!’ exploded the Doctor. ‘This is protracted murder!’

Jano sighed. ‘We have achieved a very great deal, more than you have seen yourself in any other planet on your travels — you admit as much — and all at the expense of a few savages.’

Surely the Doctor would now see reason. But he didn’t. Looking at Jano coldly, he said, ‘The sacrifice of even one poor soul would be too great for all the triumphs of your sort of civilisation.’ And, as he turned to march away, Jano signalled to the Guard.

‘Arrest him, Captain. Take him to Senta. Tell him this is an emergency, and I shall be sending him special instructions.’

The Captain caught the Doctor by the arm. ‘This way,’ he said.

‘Keep your hands off, young man!’ snapped the Doctor.

‘Move,’ ordered Edal, and he pushed the Doctor forward.

As the Doctor stopped, Edal was quick to use the light gun again. He wasn’t going to put up with any more nonsense from this old man from beyond time.

The light ray gripped the Doctor in its vice, and Edal projected him towards the door.

‘We have to do something to help him,’ said Steven.

‘There is nothing that can be done,’ said Chal.

Steven was exasperated by their resignation. ‘They are only men like us,’ he said. ‘We can fight them if we have to.’

‘They are too strong,’ said Chal.

‘We must stop them doing anything to the Doctor,’ said Dodo anxiously.

‘We cannot stop them,’ said Chal. ‘They have light guns.’

‘They will just use him like they use the rest of us,’ said Tor.

‘And how is that?’ asked Dodo.

‘They will take him to the great vats, and there he will become like the rest of us. Like Wylda.’ He pointed to Wylda, weak and breathless.

‘We’ll see about that,’ said Steven resolutely.

He took a few steps, as Chal called after him, ‘And if they catch you, you will become like the rest of us also.’

The horror of it brought Steven to a halt. ‘There must be something,’ he said.

The group of savages stood silent and hopeless.

To begin with, Senta was honoured to meet the Doctor. He thought he must be there as a special visitor.

‘I really don’t have time to show you much today,’ he said. ‘I have a full schedule.’

The Doctor glanced round the laboratory, taking it all in, understanding much of it at a glance, seeing the principles that operated this dreadful process.

‘This, I suppose, is where you conduct your experiments?’ he said.

‘Indeed it is, Doctor.’ Senta was surprised that Edal had brought this visitor without any warning.

‘No visit,’ said the Captain brusquely. ‘You are to suspend all other work and prepare for an emergency transference.’

‘Out of the question,’ barked Senta. He was feeling quite harassed.

‘The order comes directly from Jano,’ said Edal. Senta sought an explanation. ‘Are you interested in our work?’ he asked the Doctor.

‘Interested, yes,’ said the Doctor. ‘Though I mightily disapprove of it.’

‘I shall be honoured to show you my laboratory in function,’ said Senta, then turned and hissed to Edal, ‘Very well then, where is the savage for this special transference?’

‘No,’ interrupted the Doctor. ‘I refuse to be a witness to such an appalling abuse of knowledge.’

‘That’s all right, Doctor,’ said Edal drily. ‘You won’t exactly be a witness on this occasion.’ He couldn’t keep the smile from his face.

‘I should hope not, young man,’ said the Doctor. ‘Instead you’ll have the privilege of experiencing it.’

‘I will what?’ The Doctor was astounded.

Senta turned on the Captain. ‘You don’t know what you’re asking,’ he said. ‘We cannot transfer such a high form of life energy as this. It’s never been done.’

Jano came into the room at that moment and heard him.

‘This time it will be done,’ he said. ‘After all, there is always a first time, and it will be an interesting experiment for you, Senta.’

‘But he is one of us,’ protested Senta. ‘A fellow scientist.’

‘You have your orders,’ said Jano firmly. ‘See they are carried out.’

‘You have all forgotten one thing, haven’t you?’ said the Doctor. ‘My feelings on the matter.’

‘I don’t think that will count for much, Doctor,’ said Jano.

‘I shall refuse to submit to such a nauseating activity. I am going out of that door, and don’t try to stop me.’

He was almost as good as his word, reaching the door before Edal trained his gun on him and brought him to a petrified stop.

‘Quickly,’ Senta called to his attendants. ‘Make preparations. Check all attachments. Dials to zero. Fasten connections. See readings are at max. We’ve never had anything like this to do before. Be on your toes.’

The attendants scuttled smartly to their tasks, strapping the Doctor onto the transference trolley and attaching the necessary equipment.

Jano hurriedly left calling, ‘Give me a full report, Senta, when the transfer is complete.’

Edal stood guard by the door. This was one operation he wanted to see completed successfully. He had found the old man very difficult, and he would now get what he deserved.

‘Use Channel AA11,’ directed Senta. ‘We shall be breaking new ground. This will be life force of a top rarified quality.’

The Doctor was rigid and helpless, fastened by a dozen connections to the abstractor platform on the trolley. Senta made a thorough inspection.

‘Excellent. Stand by.’

The trolley was manoeuvred into place in the recess amongst the chemical vats. Senta pressed a series of switches and buttons, and the transparent panels rose around the Doctor as he lay motionless, firmly fixed in the cubicle and clamped to the floor.

The first assistant signalled: ‘All correct, Senta.’ The panels clicked into place. The Doctor was now closed off within the mechanism.

‘Proceed with first stage,’ called Senta. ‘Feed in high input vats...’ A moment later he called, ‘Now feed in special vat.’

‘All levels correct,’ called the first assistant. ‘Vaporisation,’ called Senta. And the instruction

was repeated down a long line of laboratory assistants. ‘Vaporisation on. In full function, Senta.’

Senta manipulated the instruments on his control panel, causing lights to flash, the dynamo to hum loudly, and the gassy substance to flow into the closed cubicle. The Doctor was almost obscured by the strange gas.

‘Let me know the moment anything unusual happens,’ called Senta. ‘Transfer is on... Report readings.’

These were called back to him as the power increased and the whine of the dynamo seemed to intensify.

‘Point one.’

‘Point two.’ Then there was a pause..

‘Point three.’ The dynamo shot up a note.

‘Point four.’

Even Senta caught his breath.

The white gas clouded everything. The sound of bubbling through the vats was like a series of explosions.

‘Point six,’ was called. They had jumped a full point. Nothing could stand this — not even an intellect as powerful as the Doctor’s.

But still the reading edged up.

‘Point eight.’

Senta nearly threw in his hand. He wasn’t going to have his beloved equipment blown skyhigh. ‘It’s no use,’ he called. ‘We’ll have to power down.’

‘Senta!’ His assistant was waving with excitement as he peered into the cubicle. ‘It’s working. Look — energy draining off.’

Senta checked the dials. The man was right. They had cracked the Doctor’s resistance: he was being absorbed, his special qualities were being hived off into the great vats.

‘Keep all readings constant,’ he ordered.

‘That was a triumph,’ said his assistant.

Senta nodded. He was sweating. ‘It’s a miracle,’ he said. ‘What resistance the subject had, what tremendous strength. This is a classic. Our greatest yet.’ He switched on the communication with the central information of the City. ‘All according to plan,’ he said. ‘Vaporisation in progress. No problems. Subject unconscious, but survives. Cause for celebration. Out.’

Through the clearing gas the Doctor could be seen prone, white, almost lifeless. The noise from the vats drowned everything else. The liquid within was beginning to clear. The experiment was a success.

In a sense, Senta knew, the Doctor was no longer himself.

Jano was back in the laboratory very soon after Senta’s announcement.

‘I heard your message, Senta. You are to be congratulated.’

Senta indicated the array of instruments. ‘A perfect transfer,’ he said.

‘Remarkable,’ Jam) smiled. ‘How is the Doctor?’

‘Almost totally reduced,’ said Senta ‘But in good condition. He will recover in time, and like our other subjects, we shall be able to use him again.’

Jano nodded thoughtfully. ‘You realise what this means?’ he said. ‘As we have been able to make this transfer successfully, we shall be able to do the same with the other time-travellers.’

‘The young man and the girl?’ queried Senta.

‘Yes. As it is, they are a danger to us. But as a source of high grade energy they will be of great value.’

He signalled to Edal who stood close by on duty. ‘Send out a patrol,’ he ordered. ‘The young couple who arrived with the Doctor must be brought in.’

Edal marched smartly away.

The savages hurried Steven and Dodo through the scrubland and into a narrow rocky valley.

They were surrounded by a flock of tribesmen scrambling down the sides of the valley to cluster round the strangers threateningly.

‘Leave them,’ shouted Chal. ‘They are here as friends. We bring them for safety.’

‘And what have we done for the Doctor?’ asked Steven bitterly.

‘Nothing,’ said Chal. ‘For there is nothing that can be done.’

‘You’re going to have to stand up and fight them one day,’ said Steven.

‘You have never faced the light guns,’ said Chal drily.

Steven and Dodo looked round at the rocks that climbed above them, gloomy, rugged. ‘What is this place?’ asked Dodo.

‘It is where we live,’ said Chal.

‘Here?’

‘You have seen the openings between the rocks?’ ‘You live in caves? Like animals?’

‘It is the only place we are safe. The only place the guards don’t follow us.’

The grim reality was very clear.

Jano watched the Doctor being taken from the cubicle. He looked at the motionless body and the face like a death mask as the trolley passed.

'Are you sure he's all right? What is his vitality reading?'

'Down to twenty. We were careful.'

'And his energy?'

'That is still high. He is a remarkable source. A great potential, Jano.'

'Very well,' said Jano. 'I want you to prepare for an intransference immediately.'

Senta was startled. 'So soon?'

'The sooner the better.'

'Have you already nominated a number of citizens to receive a proportion of this life force?'

'There will be only one recipient,' said Jano.

Senta was taken aback, 'That is most unusual.'

'It's an unusual experiment altogether,' agreed Jano. 'It would not be right to risk the safety of other members of the City, I have decided. I shall take full responsibility.'

It dawned on Senta just what Jano meant. 'You're going to take the entire intransference yourself?' Jano nodded gravely.

'But Jano, suppose something should go wrong? We've never done anything like this before.'

'It is for that reason I take sole risk. I shall be ready when you need me.'

Senta was about to protest, but the look on Jano's face stopped him. The chief Elder of the City hurried away.

The first assistant was over-awed. 'He's going to take the entire —'

Senta cut him short. 'It's not for you to question our leader,' he said. 'Keep silent about this.' 'Of course.'

'Get everything ready. Top priority and at speed. This doesn't look like the end of our work today. Those patrols will soon have those two other young time-travellers in here... Call up extra staff. We're going to need everybody.'

There was a sudden burst of excitement at the entrance of the valley, and one of the savages came racing across to Chal.

'What's happened?' asked Steven.

'A patrol, heading this way,' Chal told him.

Tor waved his hands aggressively. 'I.told you this

would happen. They are looking for these strangers.' 'Will they come here?' asked Dodo.

'It is possible,' Chal nodded.

'Where can we go?'

'You are not safe here,' said Tor. 'And we are not safe as long as you stay.'

'Be silent,' said Chal. He turned to Dodo. 'You will be safe in our caves.'

'You cannot take them there,' protested Tor. 'The

guards will follow. It is our last hiding place.'

'They have helped us,' said Chal. 'Now we must

help them.'

'No. They are not our people.'

‘I am leader,’ said Chal. ‘I say they can hide here.’ ‘Then our destruction is on your hands,’ shouted Tor.

Chal turned to Steven and Dodo. ‘Follow,’ he said and led them up the side of the valley.

A number of gaps could be seen in the cliffs. In some of the openings were gathered groups of the

savages, looking on apprehensively. Chal led them to an opening that looked as if it had been cut out of the cliff with primitive tools. At the entrance a girl shrunk back in alarm as Chal led them in.

‘It is all right, Nanina,’ Chal told her, ‘they are friends.’

They looked at the ceiling that had been carved out of the rock, rising above them. ‘It’s beautiful. Like a temple,’ said Dodo.

‘This is where we live,’ said Chal. ‘It is the only place in which we are safe.’

Steven gazed at the delicately chiselled interior. ‘Who made all this?’

‘Our people.’

‘It’s superb.’

‘Our ancestors were fine artists. But as time passed we became less and less able to do such things as our talents were being drained from us.’

Wylda called from the mouth of the cave, ‘Patrol! Coming this way.’

They hurried to look across the valley. At the entrance to the valley a man in the uniform of a City Guard could be seen moving towards them through the fallen rocks.

‘It’s Exorse,’ whispered Dodo.

He was coming along the bottom of the valley, holding his gun at the ready while Tor backed away before him.

‘Stay where you are,’ shouted Exorse as Tor turned to run. Tor stopped, terrified. Exorse held the gun trained on him. ‘Where are they?’ he called.

Tor shook his head as though he didn’t understand. Exorse touched the trigger and a beam of light played over the savage. He stiffened in pain, then the light went off.

‘The next time I ask,’ said Exorse, ‘you will answer. Where are the strangers?’

Tor hesitated, his eyes fixed on the light gun. Then he moaned in despair and looked up towards the caves.

‘Up there, are they?’ said Exorse. ‘Right.’

He began climbing the valley slope towards the caves. Chal ducked back.

‘Is he coming?’ asked Nanina who stood anxiously behind him.

‘I think so,’ said Chal.

‘Go with them,’ she said. ‘I will stay on watch.’ She moved to the edge of the cave and peered down. Behind her Chal hurried away, taking the strangers with him.

Exorse stopped below the caves and scanned the side of the valley. He saw Nanina watching. ‘You have the two strangers,’ called Exorse. ‘Tell them to come out.’

‘There are no strangers,’ she replied.

There was a silence as he looked slowly round at the other caves about him.

From the back of the cave Steven whispered, ‘What’s he doing?’

Nanina waved him back: ‘Stay there.’

‘How many guards?’ Steven wanted to know. ‘Only one. But he has the gun.’

She looked out. Exorse had started to climb towards her. She waved warningly towards the strangers.

‘Is there any way out of this place?’ Steven asked Chal.

‘There are passages into the rock, but they lead nowhere,’ he replied.

‘So we’re in a trap?’

‘Not a trap,’ said Chal ‘We can go into the passages.

There are many. He will not know which one to take. Come, it is best.’

They followed him to the furthest wall of the cave and ducked under a rocky arch into the gloom of a long, twisting tunnel. They disappeared just in time, for a moment later Exorse stepped into the mouth of the cave. ‘This is an order,’ he called. ‘Bring out the strangers.’

The savages huddled against the rocks looked at him in fear. In the tunnel Steven whispered, ‘What will he do?’

‘Nothing worse than they have done many times before,’ said Chal. ‘Come.’

Chal went on ahead of them. They could hear Exorse calling, ‘The strangers, girl. Where are they?’ But Nanina said nothing and Exorse called loudly, ‘Tell me — or suffer.’

And when Nanina did speak she simply said, ‘I will tell you nothing.’

In the cave Exorse stared at her in surprise. He wasn’t used to such defiance. ‘When I find them,’ he said, ‘I shall teach you to obey.’

He had no time to waste. Others of these wretched creatures would answer far more quickly. ‘You,’ he said. ‘Where are they?’

One of the terrified savages covered his face. ‘Don’t talk,’ said Nanina.

Exorse raised his gun at the cowering savage. ‘They went into the rock face,’ cried the man.

Chal led the way along the tunnel while Dodo and Steven followed, but a loose stone moving under somebody’s foot brought them to a stop while they listened in case they had been heard. The tunnels seemed to echo. But no one was following.

‘Which of these did they take?’ Exorse asked the savage as he pointed to the many openings.

Nanina tried to protect him, but she was pushed aside by the butt of Exorse’s gun. ‘Which?’ he shouted.

The savage pointed a shaking finger.

‘You have betrayed them,’ said Nanina accusingly.

Exorse moved cautiously into the tunnel, glancing at the dust on the ground. It had been recently disturbed. He kept a finger on the gun trigger as he moved on.

Dodo whispered softly, ‘It’s getting darker.’ ‘Less chance of being seen,’ replied Steven. ‘Listen,’ said the girl.

Somewhere behind them they could hear the sound of footsteps. The sound stopped, but they knew it must be the guard. He was playing a game of cat and mouse with them in this blind alley, and there was no way out.

As they moved Exorse picked up the faint sound and knew he was on the right track.

‘It’s hopeless,’ said Dodo. ‘There isn’t anywhere to hide.’

‘He may not follow,’ whispered Chal.

‘He will,’ muttered Dodo resignedly.

‘She’s right,’ agreed Steven. ‘If the tunnel gets much narrower we don’t stand a chance.’

A voice echoed along the tunnel. ‘I know you are there, strangers. It is better to give yourselves up now.’

‘Come on,’ whispered Steven. He pushed ahead. A few steps further on, the passage twisted sharply. ‘This could be it!’ Steven sounded excited. ‘We could just have a chance!’

Exorse called along the passage again. ‘Come back, I tell you. It’s for your own good.’

Steven shouted back, ‘Thanks very much. You come and get us.’

‘Do not anger him,’ said Chal in alarm.

‘Why not?’ said Steven. ‘An angry man is more likely to do something rash.’

Then he shouted down the tunnel, ‘Come on, soldier boy. What are you frightened of? You’re the man with the gun.’

‘He will destroy us all,’ said Chal in despair.

‘Tell me,’ whispered Steven, ‘how does he use that gun?’

‘What does it matter?’

‘Hurry up! I have to know how it works.’

‘There is a trigger on the right side. They point the muzzle at us, and pull the trigger. Then we cannot move.’

‘Does the beam reflect?’ asked Steven.

‘What do you mean?’

‘If the light from the gun reflects — if it strikes water and reflects onto the victim — is it still powerful?’

‘Yes,’ Chal nodded. ‘I have seen it reflect from the water of a lake.’

‘Right.’ Steven turned to Dodo. ‘Let me have the mirror they gave you, Dodo, at the presentation.’ ‘This?’ She handed it to him.

‘Now, round the rock, both of you. Keep out of sight.’

‘What are you up to, Steven?’

‘Just a little experiment... And for all our sakes, I hope it works.’

Dodo and Chal crept past and dropped to the ground around the bend in the rock. Steven stood just out of sight, pressed against the wall of the tunnel. He could hear the cautious steps of the guard moving gradually towards him. Then the steps stopped as Exorse saw the bend in the tunnel ahead.

‘You are foolish to think you can defy me,’ calledExorse. ‘Have the people of the caves not told you they can never resist us?’

‘We’re going to change all that, soldier boy,’ called back Steven mockingly. ‘Come on. What are you scared of?’

‘The travellers from beyond time are very foolish people,’ said Exorse angrily as he strode forward. But he wasn’t taking any chances: he pulled back the bolt on the gun and pressed the trigger. The deadly light shone ahead, lighting up the tunnel and clearly showing the way the passage turned to one side.

The light played on the rock just a few inches from Steven’s face. As long as he kept back in the shadow of the rock he knew he was safe, but if he should let the beam play on him he knew what would happen.

‘Keep down,’ he whispered to the figures crouching behind him.

‘I will give no more orders,’ called Exorse. ‘You will surrender. Step into the light you see shine..

Steven gripped the mirror by its long handle and jerked it out from behind the rock into the beam. There was an instantaneous cry from Exorse as the reflection shone back on him. Steven heard the gun fall with a clatter.

He was out of his hiding place in a flash and raced to where the guard stood shaken, holding his hands over his face. He had just time to see Steven snatching the gun but he didn’t have time to move.

Steven felt hurriedly for the switches. ‘How does the thing... Which switch... Ah, there we are.’

It was with a sigh of relief that he pressed a button and the beam of light lit up the dazed guard. Exorse suddenly became rigid in its power.

‘Right,’ ordered Steven. ‘Back off. Down the way you came, my friend. Move.’

Chal and Dodo came out of hiding. Chal gazed in wonder at what he saw. ‘You have taken a guard prisoner,’ he said. ‘But that is impossible!’

In the cave they could hear the sound of someone returning through the tunnel. ‘They are coming back,’ said Nanina.

Tor was horrified. ‘He will punish all of us. We shall all suffer. Chal should never have brought them here. What good does it do if we make the Elders angry?’

The beam of light could be seen in the dark, and they shrank away. A moment later they looked in amazement as Exorse stepped into the cave, a prisoner in the light of his own gun, followed by Steven who kept the muzzle trained on him, and then by Dodo and Chal.

‘Tie him up,’ Steven ordered as he switched off the gun, and Exorse collapsed to the ground.

As the others hurried to obey, Tor gazed at Steven in wonder. ‘You can destroy the people of the city?’ he asked.

Steven shrugged. ‘It’s possible.’

Tor turned in triumph to his fellows now crowding into the cave. ‘They can destroy our enemies! The strangers must be gods...’

8 ‘The Trouble With You People On This Planet...’

Senta completed his examination of the Doctor who was still lying unconscious in the office.

‘Are we to release him into the outside world like we do with the others?’ asked the first assistant.

‘He is certainly not one of the savages,’ said Senta. ‘He couldn’t look after himself out there. No, he will be kept here in the City. Take him to the guest apartments. That was where the Elders originally intended him to stay. Assist him.’

The Doctor was taken away, walking like a man in a dream.

‘Treat him with great care,’ Senta called after them. ‘He is most valuable to us.’ And then he hurried to join Jano who was already waiting in the laboratory.

‘I have dismissed all the assistants,’ said Senta.

‘Good,’ Jano nodded. ‘It is important we keep this transference a secret until we know the results. I do not wish to alarm anybody.’

‘I understand.’

Senta showed Jano into a small, elegant recess in which a chair was attached to a multitude of instruments. The walls were lined with panels and dials.

Jano had gone through the process many times before, receiving his regular boosts of life force, though he had never before subjected himself to the ordeal of absorbing the full content of such a unique subject as the Doctor. Indeed, there could be no other source of such intellectual vitality in the universe, Jano supposed.

He sat back in the chair and fastened the clips over his head and heart as usual.

‘May all go well,’ said Senta earnestly. ‘Give me the signal when you are composed.’

Jano signalled immediately. Senta took a deep breath then switched on the instruments across the control panel. The huge vats beside him instantly began to churn and bubble; they were full of a light clear liquid, but almost at once they began to cloud over, turning to grey then becoming almost black.

Senta checked the reading on the dials beside him, and made slight adjustments. All was going unbelievably well.

Once Exorse was firmly tied up in the cave — so tightly he couldn’t move hand or foot — courage seemed to seep into the veins of the savages that crowded round.

‘We should kill him while we have the chance,’ said Tor.

‘He is more use to us alive,’ Steven replied.

‘They have killed our people,’ said Tor. ‘It would be justice.’

Nanina pushed him aside. ‘Leave him.’

‘How can you have pity on him, Nanina? Think what they are doing even now to the old man, the stranger.’

‘Perhaps we could help the Doctor,’ suggested Steven.

‘Too late,’ said Tor. ‘What can we —’

Chal cut him short: ‘Be silent.’ He turned to Steven. ‘What do you wish us to do?’

‘How can I get into the City without being seen?’ he asked.

‘There is a way, but it is dangerous,’ Chal told him. Steven held up the light gun. ‘With this all things are possible. Just show me the way.’

‘And once you are in?’ asked Nanina anxiously. ‘Then Dodo and I will find the Doctor.’

‘Do you know where he is?’

‘We were given rooms in the guest apartments.’ ‘I don’t think you can do anything,’ she said. ‘We have to try,’ said Steven.

‘Very well,’ said Chal. ‘I will show you the way.’ As they left the cave Steven called back, ‘Guard the prisoner well.’

The moment they were out of sight Tor grabbed up a club. ‘The safest thing is to kill him,’ he said, swinging the heavy weapon at the prostrate guard. Nanina moved quickly, throwing herself at him, so that the blow scraped past.

‘No!’ she shouted and as he saw her angry face Tor reluctantly tossed aside the club.

Nanina examined the bruise on the prisoner’s arm.

‘Are you hurt?’ she asked. Exorse shook his head.

‘I will make sure it is clean.’ She began to bathe
the grazed arm.

‘You are the girl I brought into the laboratory?’ She nodded and continued to clean the wound. ‘Why do you help me?’ he asked.

‘It would do no good to let Tor kill you.’

He watched her. ‘What is your name?’

‘Nanina.’

‘I shall remember,’ he said.

On the edge of the scrubland Chal came to a halt. ‘The entrance is over there,’ he said pointing towards the wall of the City. ‘The door in the wall leads to the laboratory,’

‘Sure?’ asked Steven.

‘Oh yes. Many times we have been released that way after they have taken our strength from us.’ ‘Down!’ whispered Dodo suddenly.

Through the bushes they could see a guard sitting on the ground eating some fruit, his gun propped up a few feet away. ‘They have had so little trouble from us that they have become careless,’ whispered Chal.

‘We can make use of that,’ said Steven. He indicated the gun he carried. ‘How close do I have to get before this is effective?’

‘A little further,’ said Chal.

‘Wait.’ Steven crept forward cautiously through the scrub. The guard must have heard something for he looked up casually. ‘That you, Exorse?’ he called.

Steven didn’t give him a chance to check his mistake. He jumped to his feet, ran a few steps towards the startled man, lifted his gun...

‘Why, it’s...’

The beam of light hit the man before he could move, and he immediately stiffened.

‘Get his gun!’ Steven shouted to Dodo, and she ran to pick it up.

‘You can switch the gun off,’ called Chal. ‘He will not recover for a long time.’

Steven hurried to the door. ‘How do we open this?’ ‘It is simple.’ Chal pressed the control beside the handle and the door eased back.

‘Right,’ said Steven, ‘drag this fellow into the bush. Then wait for us.’

‘What will you do?’

‘Dodo and I have got to find the Doctor.’

Chal was uneasy, but he dragged the body away as Steven and Dodo pushed open the door and disappeared inside the corridor.

Senta mopped his brow as the transference ran through its program. He had never been so nervous about an operation, but it had gone without a flaw. Perfection... And the vats were now at the last stage of colouration, an inky blackness, with the bubbling reduced to a trickle.

The timer cut off automatically. For record purposes he spoke into the microphone, ‘Intransfer complete.’ Then he switched off and heard the comforting hiss of gases that signalled completion.

He actuated the panels of the recess and they slid open. Inside as the air cleared, Jano could be seen in his chair.

‘Are you all right, Jano?’ he called.

There was no reply, and Senta had a moment of concern. ‘Jano... Jano... Are you all right?’ He hurried into the recess just in time to see Jano making the adjustments to the connections.

‘Oh good,’ he said, relieved. ‘I thought for a moment something had gone wrong.’

Jano looked at him sharply, and for a moment Senta thought he reminded him of someone else. He had adopted an unusual mannerism, tucking his thumbs into his jacket and peering down his nose, like an old schoolteacher.

‘What’s all the fuss about?’ said Jano. ‘Of course I’m all right. The trouble with you people on this planet is that you find it hard to understand...’ He checked himself with a puzzled look.

‘What do you mean, Jano?’ asked Senta. ‘You are one of us. One of the people of this planet.’

‘Of course I am,’ said Jano. But he still frowned as if unable to understand something. ‘I think I’m not quite myself after that experience.’ He nodded towards the recess.

‘I understand,’ said Senta. ‘I shall give orders you are not to be disturbed.’

‘An excellent idea,’ said Jano. Again he reminded Senta of someone else as he went on, ‘It will take time to get adjusted, and my two young friends...’ Again the look of bewilderment on Jano’s face, and he passed a hand over his eyes.

‘You mean Flower and Avon?’ queried Senta. ‘No,’ replied Jano, puzzled. ‘I mean Steven and

that child with the ridiculous name... Dodo.’ ‘The strangers?’ Senta frowned.

‘They may be strangers to you, my dear fellow, but I have known them a long...’ He broke off, trying to make sense of his thoughts. ‘Yes, of course. The strangers.’

He sat in silence for a moment, his head in his hands. Senta looked on, dreading to think what might be the cause of his odd state. ‘I shall leave you, Jano,’ he said.

When Jano was alone he looked at his clothes, at his own hands, and then at the room he was in. And when he spoke there was something in his voice very like the indignant note the Doctor often had in his own voice. ‘So,’ said Jano, ‘I’m in this dreadful place, am I? Very well, I know what to do with their wicked apparatus.’

He picked up a heavy measuring rod, lifted it above his head and was about to bring it down on the control panel... But he checked himself in horror.

‘What am I doing?’ he said aloud. ‘What’s happening to me? Who am I? Jano? The Doctor?... What am I to do?’

He threw the rod away and covered his face again. He looked as though he were in real pain.

As they moved along the corridor Dodo had a growing feeling of uneasiness.

‘There’s something wrong, Steven,’ she said. ‘It shouldn’t be as easy as this to get in.’

‘They didn’t expect anyone to break in,’ said Steven.

‘Surely they should have some sort of security?’ ‘Perhaps they think one guard outside is enough.’ But Dodo was right to be concerned. Every step

they took was monitored and watched with interest on a screen in Security Control.

With Captain Edal were a number of his guards. Senta joined them. 'I think they're stopping,' he said.

Dodo had indeed come to a stop, anxiously peering along the passage. 'I don't want to go any further, Steven,' she said.

'It's our one chance to help the Doctor,' Steven encouraged her.

But still Dodo hesitated.

'We'll have to encourage them,' said Edal as he watched the scanner. He spoke into the transmitter beside him: 'Contact the guest apartments. Instructions from security. You are to conduct the time-traveller to exit passageway number U-2.' His voice could be heard in the laboratory where Jano sat in the huge empty room, alone and silent.

Edal continued, 'You are to leave the traveller by himself in the passageway. This is an immediate instruction. Out.'

Jano did not appear to have heard.

Dodo recognised the corridor ahead. 'It's the one I came along before. It turns a corner just ahead.' 'Into the lab?' asked Steven.

'Yes.'

'Come on then.' By now Dodo was getting over her fears, and followed him. As they turned the corner, they both pulled back. 'There's someone there,' said Steven. And when they looked again they couldn't believe their eyes. 'It's the Doctor!' cried Dodo. They raced towards him. 'Doctor! It's great to see you! But what are you doing? How did you get here?'

The flow of questions dried up as they saw the Doctor made no reply. Indeed, he didn't seem to see them, standing like a sleepwalker.

'Why doesn't he answer?' asked Dodo.

Steven took the Doctor's arm. 'Are you all right?' he asked.

(In Security Control Captain Edal looked on with satisfaction. He could hear Steven's voice whispering, 'Come on, Doctor. We'll get you out of here.' On the scanner it was clear that the Doctor made no move as his two friends tried to help him.)

'He's not coming,' said Dodo anxiously.

'Give him a hand,' said Steven. 'We'll take him between us.'

(On the scanner Edal watched as the Doctor was led step by step along the corridor towards the exit door. Then he leaned forward and pressed a release button on the panel, and the door at the end of the corridor was seen to close.)

'It's shutting, Steven!' shouted Dodo.

Steven spun round in time to see the door had nearly closed. He dashed forward and managed to get between it and the locking mechanism.

'Dodo, quickly! Give me a hand!'

The two of them together, exerting all their strength, struggled to push back the door until it was wide enough for a man to pass through.

'That's it, Doctor,' shouted Steven. 'On you go, now. You can make it.' But the Doctor looked blankly into space and didn't move.

'Doctor... Doctor... Go on... Get out!' Still the Doctor gazed into space, seemingly aware of nothing.

'You'll have to help him, Dodo,' said Steven.

But when Dodo went to take the Doctor's arm the door pressure had Steven forced backwards. He got his shoulder down to it, pushing as in a rugby scrum, but the weight was too great. Dodo got the Doctor to move a couple of steps, but it was too late. Steven was squeezed aside. The door clicked into place. There was no way out. The Doctor showed no interest, no emotion.

'What have they done to him?' whispered Dodo.

(Edal had every reason to be satisfied. He turned to his security guards: 'Get down to that passageway. Use destructive vapours as protection against their lightguns. Let the vapour roll towards them, and you can advance behind it. Before you reach them, all three of them will have passed out.'

The guard saluted and hurried out. From where he was the Captain could sit in front of his scanner and watch the capture of the three time-travellers in comfort. He was going to enjoy this...)

The first indication that they had been discovered came as a blanket of smoke began to blow down the corridor. 'Look out!' shouted Dodo.

They backed away from the thick, slow-moving vapour that seemed to come from nowhere, and threatened to envelop them. 'Get the Doctor!' cried Steven.

The Doctor had made no move to get away himself, and the cloud was almost on him. Steven and Dodo grabbed him and dragged him back down the corridor almost to the door which was firmly closed behind them. When they looked back the smoke seemed blacker and thicker, puffing forward, filling the corridor from wall to wall and ceiling to floor.

'Steven, what can we do?'

There was nothing he could say. It was only a question of time, and they both knew it. 'There's someone behind it,' said Steven.

They could see figures through the smoke, hooded, and uniformed. 'Use your light gun, Dodo,' Steven said.

They both tried to fire through the smoke but the beams seemed to fade and evaporate. Dodo started to cough. A moment later and they would be in the midst of the fumes.

'Let's try and get through it,' said Steven. It was a desperate idea, but they had to do something.

But one step into the swirling vapour sent them reeling back, fighting for air, struggling to breathe.

'I'm choking, Steven,' groaned Dodo, hardly able to speak.

Edal's voice came over the sound system, echoing down the corridor: 'Throw your light guns into the vapour.'

'No. Don't, Dodo,' shouted Steven.

'I can't breathe,' she gasped. 'Do what they say.' She threw her gun into the smoke. Two figures moved into the smoke from the other side and picked it up.

'Now the other gun,' came Edal's voice.

'Please, Steven. Do as he says.' Dodo had slipped to the floor and sat in a despairing heap. Beside her stood the Doctor, unmoving, seemingly unaware of the chaos around him. 'Throw it,' begged Dodo. 'Give them the gun.'

(Not only Captain Edal was watching this scene on a scanner. In the laboratory Jano sat before the panel following every move, listening to each whispered sentence. He heard Dodo's pleading voice saying, 'Give them the gun, Steven.'

Sitting alone in the empty room, Jano whispered,

'No. Don't, my boy. Don't give it to them.' His voice sounded more and more like the Doctor's. He searched hurriedly through the various panels on the instrument bank before him until he found what he wanted. And then he leaned forward, and slowly and deliberately pressed a button.)

Steven couldn't make out what the noise was behind him, and when he turned he couldn't believe what he saw.

'Dodo,' he shouted. 'The door!'

She turned to see the door opening, and beyond it the outside world with air she could breathe, and the scrubland, the rocky land in which the savages lived and hid. It seemed like paradise.

She struggled to her feet. It must be a mistake, an accident. The door would close again.

'Run, Dodo!' Steven urged her. 'Get the Doctor through it.'

'What about you?' she asked.

'Do as I tell you!'

She grabbed the Doctor and with her last energy she raced him through the open door.

'Get back!' Steven called into the smoke to the guards. He fired his gun once more before turning to race after his two companions.

'What happened?' Edal demanded.

'They've gone. They've escaped,' said Senta.

Edal looked round in a fury. 'Who opened the doors?' He raced off down the corridor, while Senta turned and hurried away.

In the laboratory Jano had one eye on the scanner as he took his finger off the button. And as he did so Senta burst into the room.

'Someone has helped the strangers to escape,' Jano said grimly. 'Give the alarm.'

9 'I Don't Trust Strangers'

On the screen they could see the door in the corridor closing as two of the guards burst through the vapour. They were a fraction of a second too late. The door had closed in their faces.

Edal took one look at the print-out in Security Control. There seemed to be only one place from which the escape could have been operated.

He called a couple of the guards to follow and headed for the laboratory. Pushing his way in, he passed a bemused Senta and found himself face to face with Jano. He couldn't believe it. The Head of the State!

'You,' he said. 'You opened the door.'

'Don't be ridiculous,' snapped Jano. 'Why should I do that? You seem to forget I am in charge. Why should I do anything to assist our enemies?'

There was no answer to that. Why should Jano help the Doctor and his friends escape? Jano was the leader who had planned their capture. He had the confidence of the Elders. His leadership had brought them to this height of success.

'But if you didn't do it...' Edal began.

'If! Kindly remember to whom you are talking, young man! I am...' Jano appeared to hesitate doubtfully. Then he went on: 'I am... I am.. His eyes revealed

his confusion. He waved his hand dismissively. ‘Get back to your work everybody.’

‘What about the strangers?’ asked Edal. ‘Do you want us to go after them?’

‘The strangers? Oh, yes. Give instructions to ‘B’ Patrol to prepare to recapture them.’

‘I’ll take charge of that myself,’ said Edal.

‘No, Captain,’ said Jano firmly, ‘you will not. I will lead the patrol.’

It was almost impossible to hurry the Doctor through the scrubland but Steven and Dodo did their best, looking back over their shoulders anxiously every few steps.

‘Any sign of them?’ asked Dodo.

‘Not so far,’ said Steven. ‘But they’re sure to follow.’

Dodo took the Doctor’s arm and tried to make him step out. ‘Come on, Doctor. Please!’ But they could get only a slow jerky step out of him, like a robot.

‘We’re not going to make it,’ said Steven.

‘Doesn’t he care what happens?’

‘I don’t think he even knows,’ said Steven.

As they rounded the shrubs ahead Chal stepped out

of hiding. He looked in amazement at the Doctor. ‘How is it possible? YQu got him away!’

‘But he won’t move,’ complained Dodo. ‘They’ll catch up with us.’

‘Look at the state he’s in,’ said Steven.

‘That is how they leave all our people after they have taken their strength,’ said Chal.

‘Will he get better?’

‘Yes. But it will take time.’

‘Where can we hide him, Chal?’

‘There is no safe place, but he will be best in our caves.’ They all turned simultaneously as they heard the sound of pursuit in the distance.

‘There they are,’ said Steven. ‘Quickly, Chal. You and Dodo take him with you. I’ll delay them.’ ‘What can you do?’ asked Dodo.

‘I can hold them back until you get there.’ Steven indicated his light gun.

Dodo was going to protest but he said brusquely, ‘Get on. Fast as you can. You’ll need all your time to get him to safety.’

Chal was already hauling the Doctor along. Dodo joined him. ‘Good luck,’ she called to Steven as he settled himself behind some rocks and looked back down the trail.

The search party came to a stop on the top of an outcrop where the land ahead could be seen. Jano and Captain Edal had with them a patrol of guards.

Jano scanned the landscape then turned to Edal. ‘The strangers could have done one of two things, Edal. They may have tried to get back to the TARDIS.’

‘What is that?’ asked Edal.

‘Their space machine. Or they may try to take cover in the Valley of Caves. I suggest we split into two parties. You take one group to see if they try to reach their machine. I will go on with the rest.’

Edal turned to his squad. ‘That section,’ he ordered. ‘Take the right path. Head for the place they landed.’

As the squad hurried off Jana gave the Captain a sharp look: ‘You aren’t going with them?’

‘No, Jano. I shall come with you. Perhaps you will need my help.’

‘Very well,’ said Jano. Their mutual suspicion was undisguised as they continued through the scrub.

From where he lay hidden, Steven had a clear view of the track through the rocks, and could hear the search party before he could see them. He had the gun trained on them as soon as they came into sight.

He was surprised to see the Leader of the Elders, Jano, at the head of the party himself, striding in front in a stiff fashion as though he were very displeased about something. It was an opportunity not to be missed, and Steven raised his gun.

Edal dashed down the track and grabbed Jano, pulling him into the cover of rocks. Jano swung round on him in anger: ‘How dare you, Captain..

‘Keep down!’ shouted Edal and pulled him back as the light beam from a gun struck the guard beside him. The man gave a strangulated scream and dropped to the ground.

‘They’re behind those rocks,’ said Edal. He aimed his gun and the light played over the rocks ahead. In his hiding place Steven crouched down as the rays flickered over his head.

Edal summed up the situation. ‘I think there’s just one of the strangers over there. We must out-flank him.’ He turned to his guards. ‘You take that side. The others over there. You had better stay here for safety, Jano.’

They crawled off into the bushes. Jano watched warily.

It was going to be a matter of stalling them, Steven knew. They would come at him from all sides. All he could do was back off and keep them moving slowly forward. The light from another gun played on the rock beside him. He dropped flat on the ground to avoid it as it flickered downwards. Then he crawled back down the track. He hid himself behind the next outcrop of rocks and prepared to fire at the first person he saw.

Dodo and Chal didn’t get the Doctor moving much faster, but they kept going. Dodo was very worried about the strange look the Doctor had; the blank eyes troubled her.

‘Will he be all right, Chal?’ she wanted to know. ‘Who can say?’ said Chal. ‘He has a chance. He is a brave man.’

‘Are we nearly there?’

‘You see the next ravine? That is the Valley of Caves.’

‘Come on, Doctor. Surely you can go a little faster?’ Dodo tried to hurry him.

‘You don’t understand,’ explained Chal. ‘He is not himself. It is as though he were asleep. Do not be angry with him. Help him.’

‘I’m sorry,’ said Dodo.

They moved together towards the ravine. Behind them they could hear the sounds of the guards calling.

‘I can hear Jano’s voice,’ said Chal, startled. ‘He is their chief. Why is he here?’

Jano saw Edal and hisguards converge on the rocks from which the light gun had been fired. They came to a halt, looking around in alarm.

‘What’s the matter?’ he shouted.

‘He is not here,’ Edal called back angrily. Jano hurried to join them.

‘He will suffer for this,’ said Edal. ‘All he is doing is playing for time. He cannot hope to delay us forever.’ He turned and shouted, ‘Give up, stranger. It will be better for you.’ But there was no reply.

Edal grumbled to Jano. ‘The longer he holds us off, the more chance the others have to get the old traveller into their caves. Then it will be a long job.’

‘But not impossible?’ said Jano. He sounded almost hopeful, and Edal gave him a wary look.

‘Not impossible by any means,’ he said. ‘But it will take the guards time, and they will not be pleased about that. I fancy they will not be too gentle with them when they are finally caught.’

Edal moved away angrily with his squad. Jano looked on thoughtfully, and then began to skirt the bushes and rubble ahead. Perhaps he might find the strangers first.

‘Be careful, Jano,’ Edal called after him.

Even as they moved forward a light gun beamed from unexpected cover, and they had to duck back. Steven had made good use of his time.

He saw the party scramble for safety, but knew they would soon find a way to come on again. The best thing to do was to back off before they got round him. He crouched below the bushes, and made his way to the next piece of cover. It looked like a good spot to Steven, but in his hurry he had not taken in the whole span around him. On one side he was vulnerable. But he was down on the ground with his gun aimed at the sound of the guards before he had a chance to check his own safety.

‘We’ve done it, Chal,’ said Dodo triumphantly. Ahead of them stretched the Valley of the Caves.

Chal looked around with a frown. ‘What are my people doing?’ he asked ‘Why is there no one on guard?’

They began to scramble down the side of the ravine, carefully guiding the steps of the Doctor.

In the cave above them Exorse was lying bound, and in pain. He tried not to show it as he had no intention of allowing these inferior creatures to see him suffer.

But Nanina watched him, understanding the marks of pain. She crossed to him with a vessel containing liquid. ‘Drink this,’ she said. ‘You will feel better.’

She held up his head as he drank from the bowl.

He looked at her with gratitude as he finished. ‘Thank you,’ he said.

‘Let me see your arm,’ she said. Exorse was in agony as she touched it.

‘I’m all right,’ he said.

Tor looked on contemptuously: ‘It is a pity I did not kill him when I had the chance. He and his kind must be destroyed. Or the rest of us will have no hope of surviving.’

Nanina looked up from where she bathed the wounded man. ‘We will not save ourselves that way, Tor,’ she said. Tor glared at her. It was a disgrace to be out-faced by this girl. He turned to appeal to the others of the tribe who crowded into the cave.

‘You hear her?’ he said. ‘Nanina protects our enemies.’ He pointed at the man on the floor of the cave. ‘This is a dangerous man. What should we do? Let him live, so that he may attack us again? So he may use us in his machines to draw out our life? Or should we get rid of our enemies while we can, so that we make life easier for our children?’

There was a movement of assent amongst the crowd. Nanina got up and faced them: ‘Have you forgotten what Chal said? He is our leader. He has given us orders. Are you going to listen to Tor who is a coward? Are you going to disobey Chal?’

The tribe shifted, uncertain. Revenge was possible. Why not take it? Nanina pointed to Exorse. ‘Chal told you. This man must not be hurt.’

Tor picked up the nearest club. Some of the other men followed him. ‘I don’t trust strangers,’ he said.

‘You have a short memory,’ said Nanina. ‘A little time ago you called them gods.’

‘Chal is not here,’ called Tor. He cannot give

orders.’ He backed away as Nanina picked up a spear.

‘Very well, Tor. If you are so brave, come forward a step. On your own. One person to face one person. I am here.’

The rest of the tribe hung back and looked towards Tor. Amazed he blinked at Nanina. ‘Would you fight for this man?’ he asked. ‘Can an enemy mean so much?’

Nanina stood facing him. Tor delayed. ‘Well?’ Nanina asked. ‘Do you step forward?’

Before Tor replied they heard Chal’s voice call from below, ‘Hello! Guard... Quickly... We need help.’ Everyone ran to the lip of the cave.

A few yards below, Chal and Dodo were struggling to bring the Doctor up the rocky slope. The others scrambled down to lend many hands.

‘Where is the other stranger?’ asked Nanina.

‘He will follow,’ Chal assured her. He looked back down the valley, but there was no sign of Steven.

Steven guessed his good luck couldn’t last. He was taking a calculated risk, buying time, but gambling on his own safety. Sooner or later they would manage to surround him. He knew he was grossly outnumbered. He’d seen guards moving forward on one flank, bobbing down, taking cover as other guards came up on his other side. This time he realised he’d very little chance of doing another tactical retreat. He would have to fight this one out.

He had the luck to see one guard trying to position himself for a shot, and he was quick enough to get the man first. He went down behind rocks with a yell. But Steven didn’t see a second guard alongside, and it was only when the man’s light gun threw its ray on the rocks close by that he rolled over and fired back. He didn’t register a hit, but the guard was forced to drop back.

It was getting too close for Steven now. Would it be possible to scramble out of here?

Eclat knew he had the situation where he wanted it. The stranger was in the middle of a circle. There was no way out. It was just a question of time. And which of those in the circle closed on him first...

The luck of the draw was that the stranger rolled away from his rocky hiding place, and edged carefully along on his elbows, through bush and scrub. What he didn't know was that he was overlooked. Jano had a clear sight of him from where he was perched behind a pile of loose stones. And Jano was in a central position, closing the circle round the unwitting young man. It was a position from which no one could miss, and Jano was an excellent shot. He took his time; he knew he could for the target was crawling just about twenty feet below.

As Jano took steady aim, he wondered to himself why he was doing all this so deliberately. Why was he being so slow? Why take all this time? Nevertheless, he had Steven in his sights, and his finger softly touched the light trigger. It was a matter of choosing the right moment to fire.

But Jano kept his finger just touching the mechanism, touching, and no more... He put on no pressure. He watched the stranger crawl away. He let him go cautiously into the scrub, watched him wriggle like a snake over the ground; and he could still have fired, could still have captured him in the grip of those paralysing rays... But he did nothing. Steven disappeared, and a bemused Jano lowered his gun. There was no explanation for it. He did not understand what he had done, nor why he had done it. He was still in this position a moment later when fresh beams of light played across rocks on the other side and a guard cried out. It was clear that the stranger had slipped through the net. He was firing from another position, and effectively at that.

Edal came scrambling through bushes and over rocks to where Jano stood. 'He's got away,' barked the Captain. 'We were all round him, and he got out.' Each word was a challenge, an accusation. 'How could he do that?' he demanded.

'You must ask your guard,' said Jano calmly.

Edal glared at him. There was much he could say, but as yet he did not dare. His suspicions were too outlandish to make sense. But what other explanation could there be? 'It is too late now,' he said grimly. 'They will be in the valley now.'

10 'All We Need Is One Good Friend'

They were still helping the Doctor up the cliff path when they heard someone running towards them through the ravine.

'It's Steven!' shouted Dodo with delight.

Steven saw them, and called a warning: 'Get inside the cave! They aren't far behind!'

He began climbing the side of the ravine as Nanina, Chal and Dodo took the Doctor the last few steps into the safety of their primitive home.

Steven was right. The search party was only a matter of fifty yards or so behind, coming over the crest of the ridge and into the valley before they were out of sight.

'There they are,' shouted Edal. He pointed to the caves. At the last moment it seemed the Doctor was a sitting target. 'Fire,' ordered Edal.

The guard beside him swung up his gun. Across the narrow valley the savages all seemed rooted to the spot. The old sense of hopelessness had taken over, thought Steven. They seemed hypnotised by the people from the City.

Steven acted quickly. He fired at the guard and had the satisfaction of seeing him collapse in a heap, then he swung the beam round on the rest of the group, forcing them to dive for cover behind the ridge.

‘Everyone to the back of the cave,’ shouted Steven.

He came up the rest of the cliffside, hand over fist. ‘Dodo,’ he called, ‘get those capsules.’

For a moment she couldn’t think what he meant.

‘The ones we got from the TARDIS,’ he told her. He stayed at the mouth of the cave with his eyes on the ridge. ‘The ones the Doctor sent us for.’

‘The ones we gave the savage?’ she said.

‘Right.’

Dodo made a quick search of her pockets. ‘Thank goodness, I’ve still got them.’

‘How many did we give Wylda?’ asked Steven. ‘Two.’

‘That seemed to work,’ said Steven. ‘Give the Doctor the same.’

Dodo carefully shook two of the little pellets into her hand and offered them to the Doctor. He showed no interest.

‘You’ll have to excuse me, Doctor,’ she said, ‘but it’s for your own good.’ She popped them into his mouth and waited. If she had expected immediate results she was disappointed, for nothing seemed to be happening.

‘Someone’s moving,’ called Steven, and Dodo hurried to join him. Chal and the others clustered behind her as they looked across the ravine.

Someone was indeed moving, coming from behind cover, carrying no arms, and climbing slowly down the far side. There was a moment of stupefied silence. Then Chal said, ‘It’s Jano. The Leader.’

They looked on in amazement as Jano neared the foot of the valley. At any time Steven could have fired at his exposed back. The leader of their enemies was offering himself as a target! It was inexplicable!

‘Fire,’ shouted Tor. ‘Fire now.’ Everyone else took up the cry, even Chal.

‘Shoot,’ he said urgently. ‘Shoot, stranger. Without their leader they will be useless.’

It seemed the only thing to do. He took aim. It was very simple, a slow moving object. He would have fired but for the hand that reached out and took the gun from him.

‘Don’t fire,’ said a voice in his ear. ‘Not at Jano.’ Everyone turned in surprise.

‘Doctor!’ cried Dodo. ‘Doctor! Wonderful!’

‘What are you doing, Doctor?’ Steven blinked at

him. The Doctor looked every inch himself again. ‘You are not to fire at Jano,’ said the Doctor drily. ‘But he is the enemy,’ protested Tor.

The Doctor ignored him. ‘Those are my instructions,’ he said in his familiar imperious fashion. ‘Jano is not to be harmed.’ It was marvellous to have the Doctor back again, although he did speak sometimes as though every word he said was like laying down a law.

From the other side of the valley, Edal watched. He couldn’t understand what was happening. Why didn’t the stranger fire? Surely he had his gun?

Even when Jano slipped and lay at the foot of the valley not a stone was thrown. Jano picked himself up, and Edal sent two of his guards to help him, and they were allowed to do so without the stranger firing. It was an odd sort of truce. They helped Jano back to the ridge where he rested, watched by the puzzled Captain.

‘Just can’t make it out,’ said Edal to his guard. He felt as though there was some sort of split loyalty at work.

In the cave the Doctor appeared to have recovered, but Dodo kept a wary eye on him. ‘Are you sure you’re all right?’ she asked again.

The Doctor patted himself thoughtfully. ‘Yes, I think so. It was very odd, wasn’t it? I think I must have fallen into a sort of coma. It was as though all my strength had been sapped from me.’

‘They did that to you,’ said Chal, ‘and you let their leader escape?’

‘Quite right, my friend,’ the Doctor nodded agreeably.

‘We must get back to the TARDIS as quickly as we can,’ said Dodo.

The Doctor looked at her with some surprise. ‘My dear girl, we can’t do that. Not yet. We have work to do.’

She was equally surprised. ‘Work?’

The Doctor had clearly made up his mind. ‘I don’t intend to go off and leave these poor people in this oppressed state.’

‘I don’t see what you can do about it,’ said Steven. ‘You aren’t going to change their way of thinking. The Elders in the City are never going to accept Chal and his fellows as equals.’

‘You are probably right,’ nodded the Doctor. ‘And I won’t try to convince them.’

‘Then what are you going to do, stranger?’ asked Chal.

‘I shall destroy the means whereby they hold this power over you,’ said the Doctor simply. There was a silence while that sank in.

‘Destroy the laboratory?’ said Steven.

‘Precisely,’ smiled the Doctor.

‘But how?’ asked Steven. ‘How do we get in there?’ ‘All we need,’ said the Doctor, ‘is one good friend on the other side.’

‘That isn’t possible,’ said Nanina sadly.

‘I think we have him already,’ said the Doctor. He walked up and down in the cave, with his fingers in his waistcoat, occasionally adjusting his large floppy tie, looking rather pleased with himself, and being what Steven called ‘enigmatic’. There was no use asking him any more questions.

‘Just wait, my boy,’ he said. ‘Just wait.’

They were still on guard on the other side of the valley. Edal couldn’t make up his mind what to do, and Jano was being singularly unhelpful.

‘It will be dark very soon,’ said Jano, looking up at
the sky. ‘I want you to go back to the City.’

‘And leave you here?’ Edal was surprised and
suspicious.

‘I shall be all right,’ said Jano.

‘But it would be improper if I —’

‘That is an order, Captain,’ said Jano. ‘Tell Senta and the Elders that I shall return with the strangers.’ ‘How will you do that?’

‘I shall bring them back as prisoners.’

Edal looked sharply at his leader; he wondered if the experience had damaged his brain. What could he do on his own?

‘I obey under protest,’ he said. He saluted, called the guards to order, and moved off towards the City.

Jano watched them move out of sight. They were soon lost in the growing dusk. Then he turned and looked up at the dark, empty mouths of the caves.

Steven reported very cheerfully to the Doctor, 'They've gone.'

'All of them?' asked the Doctor in surprise. 'I'm not sure,' said Steven. 'It's getting dark.'

'I should be very surprised if they've all gone,' said the Doctor. 'I think you'll find they have left one behind.'

'I'll stay on watch in that case,' said Steven.

'No need, dear boy,' said the Doctor airily.

The savages began to mutter amongst themselves on the other side of the cave. 'The old man talks in riddles,' said Chal. 'He says they have not all gone, and yet we need no guard.'

The Doctor heard him. 'Quite correct, my friend,' he called out. 'Wait until it's really dark. Then I think we shall have a visitor.'

They looked at him in wonder.

Something of the same thought had gone through Edal's mind. He was very uneasy about leaving Jano. He was up to something, but Edal couldn't think what. As soon as he got back to the City he expressed his suspicions to Senta.

'Then you shouldn't have left him,' said Senta.

'I had no choice,' replied Edal. 'It was an order. I tell you, Jano is behaving very strangely. Not at all like himself.'

'What exactly do you mean by that?' asked Senta apprehensively.

'I can't put my finger on it,' said Edal, 'but he's changed.'

Senta looked at him challengingly. 'That's a very dangerous accusation to make,' he said.

The two men turned as the door opened and several of the Elders arrived, summoned to an emergency meeting. Senta indicated them to Edal. 'Do you dare repeat it in front of them?' he asked.

Edal was not to be shaken. 'I was ordered to return here by Jano,' he said, then added firmly, 'I believe we are about to be betrayed.'

There was a startled silence.

It was suddenly dark in the ravine as night fell, and the cave was lit only by a smoky fire. Night seemed to bring another sort of silence, where any faint sound echoed about them. Huddled round the fire, the savages listened intently, watching the Doctor as they did so, uncertain what to expect.

'There's someone coming now,' whispered Dodo.

Steven picked up the light gun. He too heard the noise of something moving on the cliff face outside. The Doctor saw him and called out cheerfully. 'You will not need that, my boy.'

His confidence seemed to have no reason. Steven began to protest, but the Doctor held up a hand for silence.

They waited as the noise grew closer. Someone was undoubtedly climbing to the mouth of the cave. The sound stopped. There was a moment's pause.

'Doctor.' It was Jano's voice. 'Doctor, tell them not to be alarmed.'

There was a wave of panic amongst the savages. 'It's Jano,' said Chal.

'That's all right.' The Doctor retained his cheerful note. 'Come along, Jano. We've been expecting you.'

As Jano pulled himself into the cave the savages scattered into the darkness. It was impossible for them to face the formidable leader of their enemies. The Doctor called to Chal, ‘Tell your people they are safe. Jano comes as a friend.’

‘So you know?’ asked Jano.

The Doctor nodded. ‘It was an untried experiment, wasn’t it? And you are not the man to let someone else take such a risk. That’s how I saw it.’

‘You were right,’ said Jano. He looked at the Doctor questioningly. ‘And do you know why I am here?’ ‘I can guess,’ said the Doctor.

‘Very well,’ said Jano ‘Tell me. What has happened to me, Doctor?’

The Doctor chuckled. ‘Very simple, my dear fellow. You wanted my intellect — for which I don’t blame you — and you took it. But along with it you got something you didn’t bargain for. You absorbed a sense of right and wrong. In other words, you got a little conscience.’

‘Conscience?’ Steven looked from one man to the other.

‘Oh yes,’ said the Doctor firmly. ‘Jano has now a sense of values — of justice, humanity — one might almost say "wisdom", if that doesn’t sound too immodest. And with this change he has become an explosive element in a civilisation such as his.’

‘Is this true?’ Steven turned to Jano.

Jano nodded slowly, ‘I think it must be. I know that since that experiment I have no longer been sure of myself and what I believed before. I have suddenly become aware of the evil we have been doing, and I am determined to bring it to an end.’

In the shadows the savages had been listening, bewildered, suspicious, uncertain. ‘You are going to help us?’ asked Chal incredulously.

‘Yes,’ said Jano simply.

Tor was contemptuous: ‘You could never get any of your fellows in the City to agree.’

Again Jano nodded in agreement. ‘I know,’ he said. ‘I shall not try to persuade them.’

That sounded to Steven exactly like something the Doctor had already said. It was a bizarre duplication, one man of the other.

‘Jano has another plan,’ said the Doctor.

‘How do you know?’ asked Jano.

The Doctor smiled. ‘I think it is the same as mine,’ he said.

Even Tor — and he was a man of a wary and suspicious mind — even Tor had got so caught up in what was happening that evening that he had forgotten the guard, bound hand and foot at the back of the cave.

And Exorse had made good use of the diversion. It had taken a long time, and a good deal of frayed skin, but he had rubbed the cords on his wrists until they were ragged enough to snap. He had then pulled up his feet, unnoticed in the dark with all the excitement around him, and he had cautiously managed to untie them.

While everyone hung on Jano’s words, waiting to hear what plan he had that might bring their release from a bondage worse than slavery, Exorse scrambled to his feet and shouldered his way through the few savages that stood between him and the opening of the cave.

Chal reacted quickest, shouting to Steven to apprehend him, but the guard was past him and away, taking a wild leap down the side of the slope, catching at the cliff path, steadying himself, and disappearing into the darkness before anyone moved.

Tor was in despair. 'Now he will get back to the City, and that will be the end of all your fine plans.'

'We must take that chance,' said the Doctor. But then a second figure slipped through the crowd and made her way out of the cave.

'Nanina!' called Dodo. She guessed what the girl was up to, and tried to stop her. But she was too late.

Chal hurried to look out, but there was no sign of her. Nanina knew her way over these rugged slopes by day or night, and there was no chance of catching her.

It took Exorse far longer to climb down the valley side and make his way along the foot of the ravine than it took Nanina, and she caught him up before he had cleared the ridge.

He heard the sound of someone coming behind him, and he was ready to fight. He had a thick branch of wood in his hand as Nanina came up the path into a patch of moonlight, and he was swinging it to go into the attack, when he saw who it was.

'Why do you follow?' he asked. He stood looking at her, uneasy yet determined.

She made no attempt to hold him. 'If you betray Jano,' she said, 'you betray all of us.'

He shrugged, and tossed aside the club. 'Then what will become of us?' she said.

'It is Jano who is the traitor,' said Exorse angrily.

'What have you learnt today, Exorse? Nothing? 'That we are people like yourselves?' And as he didn't reply she went on, 'What chance shall we ever have if you go back and speak what you have heard?'

'You think I should keep silent about treachery?' he demanded.

'You owe me your life,' she said simply. 'I have a right to ask you. If you are against us now, you condemn us forever.' He could hardly bear to look at her, for he knew this was true. But there was such a thing as duty. He turned quickly and hurried on his way. She watched him until he disappeared into the dark.

It was a very sombre conference that Senta and the Elders held with Edal. And it was only when Senta felt he had no option that he spoke out.

'I promised Jano I would tell no one,' he said, 'but now I must. The entire transference absorbed from the Traveller From Beyond Time was absorbed as an intransference by Jano. We knew this was a risk, and it appears he has taken in some very dangerous ideas in the process.'

There was a good deal of speculation, but no one could see how to handle the problem. It had never happened before. Edal cut across the intellectual analysis that was going on. 'We can no longer trust him,' he said. 'He's not fit to lead. I will take control. We must declare an emergency. And we must be ready for anything Jano tries to do.'

Exorse burst into the conference room. 'What is the meaning of this?' barked Senta.

‘I have been a prisoner,’ said Exorse.

‘We know that,’ said Edal, watching him narrowly. ‘The stranger had one of the light guns, and I was taken to the Valley of Caves.’

‘You were with Jano,’ said Edal.

Exorse nodded. ‘That is why I am here to report.’ ‘You must tell the whole truth,’ said Edal. ‘We no longer trust him.’

‘The Captain tells us that Jano has become deranged. He has gone over to the side of the savages,’ said Senta. ‘Is this true?’

Exorse guessed the whole of their civilisation depended on his answer.

11 ‘Do You Think We Will Ever See Him Again?’

It was a strange sight as the oddly mixed crew moved through the scrubland in the light of the gun that Jano held. A train of prisoners was led by the Doctor, with Steven and Dodo following. Behind them in a straggling line came Nanina, Chal and Tor. Several other tribesmen brought up the rear while last of all came Jano, urging them on brutally, letting his light gun flicker over those who stepped out of line, sending them reeling on, as he shouted, ‘Get along. Keep moving. And keep your hands over your heads.’

There was no doubting who was the task master, and the weapon Jano carried acted with far greater force than a whip. Those on guard outside the City were relieved to see their leader back in his true style. The rumours that had flown round the City must all be false. Jano was clearly the strong man they had always known him to be.

They gladly opened the City gates and crowded along to cheer him on his way as he headed for the Conference chamber.

‘You have nothing more to report?’ Edal asked. He had made up his mind Exorse was lying. He couldn’t understand this epidemic of betrayal that seemed to be affecting the citizens. But he knew he could stem that tide.

‘I have no further information,’ said Exorse.

‘Very well,’ said Edal coldly. ‘We shall see what the interrogators can get out of you.’

Exorse turned to the Elders in alarm. ‘That is forbidden,’ he said. ‘Only the leader has the right to sent citizens to the Interrogators.’

Senta tried to explain. ‘Captain Edal has called an emergency. He has taken over the leadership in the absence of Jano.’

‘In the absence of Jano!’ Jano shouted robustly from the doorway as he drove in his gaggle of prisoners. ‘In the absence of Jano! But Jano is here! And in command! And demanding an explanation!’

He herded the prisoners into a tightly packed body against the wall, flicking the light beam like a whip, shouting, cursing them, striking a real terror into them that shone in their eyes. The Doctor marvelled and gave him top marks for his performance.

‘But Jano,’ said Senta nervously. ‘We did not expect you back.’

Jano spun round on him furiously. ‘Not back? Why not? Did I not say I would be back with the strangers as prisoners?’ He flicked the beam at the group with a flourish. ‘Well, there they are.’

Senta glowered at Edal. ‘So you were wrong,’ he said. He turned to Jano. ‘Captain Edal informed us you had gone over to the savages. He attempted to put himself in your place.’

‘Guard,’ called Jano, ‘the Captain is under arrest.’ ‘I demand to be heard!’ shouted Edal.

‘You will be heard at the right time and in the right place,’ said Jano. ‘Take him away.’

The guards bundled Edal out of the room, still protesting, but also bewildered that he had made such a mistake.

‘We apologise,’ said Senta.

‘That’s of no importance,’ said Jano. ‘We have work to complete.’ He indicated the prisoners. ‘Take them into the transference laboratory.’

‘All of them?’ asked Senta.

‘All, and at once,’ said Jano.

Guards began to shepherd the Doctor and his fellows into the passage that led to the laboratory. There was genuine alarm amongst the savages. Most of them had been along these corridors before, and the memories haunted them. They started making a terrifying noise.

‘Are they to be prepared for transference?’ asked Senta.

‘You will be given instructions,’ said Jano. ‘The Elders will follow.’

It was with deep, but vague misgivings that the Elders congregated in the laboratory. Jano dismissed the guards. ‘The Elders and leaders of the City remain,’ he ordered. And when everyone else had gone he took over the control panel and issued instructions for the safety doors to be closed.

‘What is happening?’ demanded Senta. ‘I am responsible for the laboratory. I must be told.’

Jano faced his fellow rulers. By this time they were more than apprehensive. ‘What I have to say,’ said Jana, ‘will be hard for you to understand. It may seem like madness, as it would have seemed to me a short time ago. For no man gives away the powers with which he has control over his fellows. No man lightly relinquishes his advantages, be they ever so inhumane and unjust.’

Now they were sure something was very wrong. They should have listened to the Captain. Edal had been correct, and Jano was on the point of some folly. Senta edged towards the doors.

‘Stay where you are,’ called Jano. He still had the light gun in his hand, symbol of the domination the people of the City had wielded for so long. Senta froze; he had no desire to be immobilised in its rays.

The Elders found themselves shouting out time-honoured catch phrases, words they had heard Jano use himself: ‘We have never used our power for ill, Jano,’ they called. ‘Look at the superb life of culture, art and reason we have built up.’

Jano nodded. ‘Yes. For ourselves. To the exclusion of the rest of mankind.’

They were dumbfounded. ‘What mankind?’

Jano waved a hand towards the prisoners. ‘Our fellows,’ he said.

There was a shocked silence. Now they knew he was insane.

‘This is what I am asking you to do,’ said Jano. ‘Here, in these rooms lies the source of our power, and our ability to do evil. I don’t expect a change of heart from all of you. That would be too much. Generations of privilege have ingrained a prejudice in us that will make it impossible for most of us to behave according to a principle. All we can do to be sure we stand on the side of right

and humanity is to destroy the mechanism that gives us this power in such an evil fashion.'

Word by word the Doctor knew what Jano was saying, knew what he was about to say. It was a strange dual personality that functioned. The Doctor's thoughts were being heard as Jano spoke. The Doctor trusted that the power of the intransference would last until the deeds were done.

The Elders looked blankly at their leader. They needed to be told in words of one syllable exactly what it was he was proposing.

'I am telling you to destroy the equipment in this laboratory. The plant, the controls, the designs, the entire instrument of transference. It must never happen again.'

Senta regained courage in his outrage. 'I will not allow it. It would be sacrilege.'

'It's sacrilege to do anything else,' said Jano. 'As the leaders of our community you must take the lead. Everything must be smashed to atoms.' He picked up a heavy instrument from the control table.

'Stop him!' shouted Senta.

He raced forward but Jano had already struck. The panel before him shattered and a jet of vapour hissed into the room.

Senta pointed to the bell by the door. 'The alarm!' he called and one of the Elders hurried to turn it on. In the distance the siren sound swept through the city.

'It doesn't look as though Jano is getting much support,' said the Doctor. 'Perhaps we should lend a hand.'

The prisoners didn't need a second bidding. They snatched up anything that was handy, and began laying into the tiers of instruments that had brought them so much pain. The noise of breaking machinery was, quite literally, shattering, but it brought a wild delight to those at last making a stand for freedom. It was at that moment Senta realised all was not lost. The damage done so far was not irreparable, and they could fight back.

They had overlooked that one of the guards was still present; Exorse stood by the door, uncertain, hesitating, but holding the light gun that could save the City.

'Use it!' shouted Senta. 'Exorse... The gun! Before it is too late. Jano is out of his mind. He must be stopped.'

And one part of Exorse's mind told him that Senta was right: Jano was destroying the world as they had known it, and what was to follow was any man's guess — it would be uncomfortable, perhaps dangerous, and unpredictable. But the other part of his brain was in a turmoil, guessing that his leader had taken a stand that would bring another type of world into being, a world in which life for them all would be better.

'Exorse!' It was a last plea from Senta. 'It's for your own people!'

Exorse saw through the dust and debris the slight, lithe, figure of Nanina, wielding a rod of metal, sending it down with a crash on the very instrument that had so nearly taken her life. The joy of that action seemed to restore all the vitality that had gone from her. Chaos surrounded her. Exorse elbowed his way through the crowd to join her. He used the butt of his gun to smash the machine next to her. She looked at him, stopping her own efforts, and he saw in her eyes her private happiness.

Wreckage lay at the Doctor's feet. He knew that by now it was impossible to restore anything of the mechanism that filled the room. The great vats beside him bubbled fiercely, a cauldron spilled over, fumes seeped through, draining away. Wires, connections and broken conductors littered the floor. It was time to call off the onslaught.,

There came the sound of hammering on the outside doors. Edal's voice resounded, 'Open the doors, Senta.' There was a struggle to reach the exit controls. The Doctor looked on, contemplating the primitive struggle taking place in this, one of the most sophisticated places he could remember visiting. There was a moral in it somewhere.

But Steven, Exorse and their allies outnumbered the Elders, and held them back until destruction had run its course, and the laboratories were in ruins.

Everywhere was ankle-deep in scientific litter. The so-called savages waded through the rubble that had once subjected them to slavery. They were too overcome even to be jubilant. A sense of responsibility had suddenly descended onto everyone's shoulders.

Everyone turned to Jano. The Doctor was confident now of what he would say. There was really no further need to sustain this two-way communication that had been going on at an intransference level.

Now Jano spoke for himself: 'We are at the beginning. For both the people of the City, and for Chal and his friends. After the destruction we must learn to live together, to build a world for everyone. And we shall need a new leader, someone who can be trusted, and who can unite us.'

The door suddenly gave way with a crash and Edal and his guards swarmed in. 'Make sure the strangers don't escape,' shouted Edal above the noise. 'This disaster has been brought on us by them. Kill them on sight.'

He came in at the head of a little mob and came to a stop as he saw the carnage. He was in a fury. 'Kill them!' he shouted, 'kill them!'

And there in the chaos he saw Jano. This was a moment for revenge. 'Arrest Jano,' he barked.

The guards swept forward. Facing them, Jano made no attempt to escape. But Steven moved fast, getting between Jano and the crowd. 'What do you think you can do now?' he shouted. 'Your power has gone. This place has been destroyed. You are going to need Jano as never before.'

'Don't listen to him,' said Edal. 'I should have got rid of him long ago.'

Then he saw the Doctor making his way towards them. 'Look what you have done to us, Doctor! This is because of you.'

'With a little help from my friends,' smiled the Doctor.

'Edal,' said Jano, 'you have no further authority.' 'You are a traitor.' Edal brought up his gun. 'Drop it,' called Steven.

'Before you give orders,' said Edal grimly, 'you should be sure you have the fire-power to see they can be enforced.' He grinned sourly at Steven and took aim at Jano.

Steven swung round on Exorse who stood behind him, grabbing his gun, jerking it from him and firing. Edal was open-mouthed at the speed he moved, and took the full force of the light beam, pitching forward into the litter on the ground.

‘We owe you much already,’ said Jano. ‘Now I owe you my life.’ They picked Edal up and carried him to the emergency room.

‘He is a strong fellow,’ said the Doctor. ‘He will recover. It is good he should do. You will have need of such men. All they will need is a time for understanding, then perhaps you will find that the most loyal and useful are those such as Edal.’

Later the Elders had recovered sufficiently to give a subdued audience to the Doctor and his friends.

‘Now your power over your fellows has gone you must build on a new foundation,’ said the Doctor.

The Elders had asked Jano to speak for them. ‘We need someone like yourself, Doctor, to guide us. The past will be forgotten slowly, and we need a mediator... At least until we have begun to feel we are one people.’

‘That is true,’ mused the Doctor.

‘So you see how important it is for you to stay on our planet for a while.’

‘Unfortunately that is impossible in my case,’ said the Doctor.

Jano was not to be discouraged: ‘But we must have someone in whom we can trust. His judgements must come from the heart, even more than from his head.’

‘I agree,’ said the Doctor. ‘And I think you have the man here.’

For a moment everyone wondered who he could mean. Then Jano stepped forward. ‘I understand,’ he said. ‘This is such a man.’ He put his hand on Steven’s shoulder.

Steven looked at him blankly: ‘Just a moment, I couldn’t..

‘It’s a great honour, Steven,’ said the Doctor.

‘I know,’ protested Steven. ‘But I can’t just walk out on you, Doctor.’

The Doctor smiled warmly. ‘Think what a challenge it would be, my boy. To set these people, this planet, on its feet again. No easy task. But I think you are ready for it.’

Steven hesitated. He looked round at the shambles of this once magnificent civilisation, now thronged with a mixture of citizens and savages. A confusion of elements which could go for a start.

‘Do you think I could do it, Doctor?’

‘I’m sure of it,’ said the Doctor. ‘In fact, you’re the only one who could put it together.’

Steven turned to the men opposite. ‘Is this an offer from both sides?’

‘It is from us,’ said Chal. ‘With you as leader we would have real hope. We could become great again. And we would be equals.’

‘What about your fellows, like Tor?’

‘I accept you,’ called out Tor, ‘though I am sure there will also be times I shall complain.’

‘And you know what we have said,’ Jano told him.

To Steven it was like cutting oneself off from all safe things, but he said, ‘Very well. I shall stay.’ Dodo had been standing a few steps away. Now she moved to take his arm.

‘I shall miss you both,’ said Steven.

‘And we shall miss you,’ said Dodo.

Jano took the Doctor aside. ‘For many light years we looked forward to your visit, Doctor. Your wisdom was well known to us. But we did not dream that you would have brought us such a miracle.’

‘Thank you, Jano, but perhaps next time you feel the need for some of that wisdom you will allow me to give it to you of my own free will, and you won’t put me in an oven to try to steam it out of me.’

‘We shall be waiting for you in the Conference Chamber, Steven,’ Jano said as he led the rest of the Elders away. It was the moment of parting and Steven couldn’t think what to say.

‘I am proud of you, my boy,’ said the Doctor. ‘Goodbye, Steven, and good luck,’ said Dodo.

‘I... I... Well, Doctor...’ Steven could only

shake his head.

‘I quite understand,’ said the Doctor. ‘Well, on you go. You mustn’t keep your new friends waiting.’

‘Goodbye, Dodo.’ Steven put his arms round her with great affection, and Dodo was very moved. She waved as Steven turned and hurried away.

She asked the Doctor rather wistfully, ‘Do you think we will ever see him again?’

The Doctor was thoughtful: ‘Who knows? In this strange complex of time and space anything is possible... Well, my dear, we must be on our way... We mustn’t look back.’ The Doctor had put an arm around her shoulder and led her away.

It was a familiar track they took as they headed back towards the TARDIS.